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The inner life, its nature,
relapse, and recovery

THE INNER LIFE.

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THE INNER LIFE,

ITS

NATURE, RELAPSE, AND RECOVERY.

BY

OCTAVIUS WINSLOW, M.A.

“ Strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.” EPH. iii. 16.

LONDON:

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PREFACE.

It was the dying observation—penned the day preceding her departure—of one of the most amiable and intellectual of her sex*—“Did you know what thoughts I have now, you would see as I do, that the whole business of life is preparation for death.” In contrast with this weighty sentiment of the dying Christian, we place the solemn testimony of the dying worldling—“I have all my days,” said he, “been getting ready to live, and now I must die!” What an affecting declaration is this! And how true of the great mass of our

* Jane Taylor.

fellow immortals,—all planning, and toiling, and preparing to live—how few preparing to die! To place before such the subject of *real life*, and to awaken in their minds a consideration of its nature, and a sense of its solemnities, is one design of the following pages.

But they address themselves more especially, and at length, to a smaller, though by no means a limited class—the religious professors of the day. The subject of his work suggested itself to the Author's mind during a visit to the metropolis. His close intercourse, at that time, with what is called the 'religious world,' forced upon his mind the painful conviction, that whilst religious profession was greatly on the increase—and never more so in the higher classes of society than at the present—vital godliness was in proportion on the decline; that while—to speak commercially—the commodity of religion was increasing, its quality was deteriorating. The vast number whose Christian profession was

avowed—whose religious character was recognised—whose theological creed was sound—whose conversation was pious—whose sacred observances were rigid—whose benevolence was applauded—whose zeal was admired—who prided themselves upon their eloquent preacher, and their favourite religious author; but who yet were living in the world, and living as the world, and living to the world—deeply and painfully affected him. The question frequently arose in his mind—“Where is the salt? where are the really living souls? where are those who know what true conversion is? who are following Christ, and are living for God? Where are the possessors of the inner life?” Alas! the world has become so like the Church, and the Church so closely resembles the world—the one so religious, and the other so carnal—an unskilled eye may be deceived in searching for the essential points of difference. Nor this alone. Even amongst those in whose souls it would be wrong,

may, impossible, to deny the existence of spiritual life, how few are found who really seem for themselves to know it !

On his return to his flock, the Author—in his usual extemporaneous mode of address—unburdened his mind from the pulpit. The result, in a calmly written and greatly amplified form, is now, with lowliness and prayer, presented to the public. Deeply sensible as he is of the many imperfections of his performance, he yet does not regret its undertaking. The hours of holy, tranquil thought stolen from the pillow, abstracted from the attractions of the domestic circle, and the engagements of a pleasant pastorate—and devoted to the preparation of this work, have been to his own mind inexpressibly soothing and solemn : may a kindred influence—tenfold in its measure—rest upon the spirit of the reader !

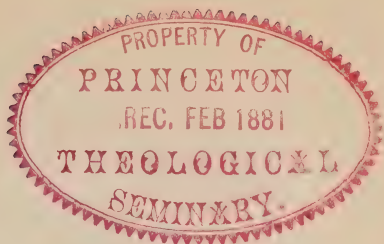
The object of this simple treatise—as its

title sufficiently intimates—is to unfold the nature, the relapse, and the recovery of the spiritual life of the believer. The work may with propriety,—and with God’s blessing, may with profit,—be placed in the hands of the *unconverted*, to whom much of its contents are particularly and earnestly addressed. It chiefly, however, appeals to the conscience of the religious professor, and is designed to meet the general character of the prevailing Christianity of the day. But the experienced and matured Christian is not overlooked in the discussion of the subject. The temptations—the conflicts—the trials, and the various fluctuations of feeling, through which he passes in his difficult but blessed way to his heavenly rest, together with his encouragements, consolations, and hopes, pass under review in these pages. To the prayers of the living soul the work is commended—to the blessing of the Holy Spirit of life it is committed

—to the glory of the TRIUNE GOD it is dedicated. And should He condescend to own it, to the quickening of any dead soul,—to the reviving of spiritual life in any believer,—to the confirmation of any wavering, or to the comfort of any tried child of God,—to Him shall be all the praise. Amen.

LEAMINGTON,

January, 1850.



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

THE NATURE AND MANIFESTATIONS OF THE INNER LIFE	1
--	---

CHAPTER II.

THE INNER LIFE IN ITS GRADUAL AND IMPERCEP- TIBLE RELAPSE	45
--	----

CHAPTER III.

THE INNER LIFE CONTRASTED WITH ITS COUNTER- FEIT	73
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

THE INNER LIFE IN ITS RELAPSED INFLUENCE . .	111
--	-----

CHAPTER V.

THE RE-QUICKENING OF THE INNER LIFE . . .	138
---	-----

CHAPTER VI.

	PAGE
THE PENITENCE AND PRAYER OF THE INNER LIFE	. 163

CHAPTER VII.

THE RENEWED ANOINTING OF THE INNER LIFE	. . 182
---	---------

CHAPTER VIII.

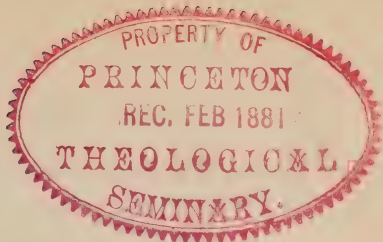
THE INFLUENCE OF SANCTIFIED TRIAL UPON THE INNER LIFE	209
--	-----

CHAPTER IX.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IN ITS RELATION TO THE INNER LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN	231
--	-----

CHAPTER X

HEAVEN, THE CONSUMMATION OF THE INNER LIFE	. 268
--	-------



THE INNER LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE NATURE AND MANIFESTATIONS OF THE INNER LIFE.

"I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."—GAL. ii. 20.

It is impossible for a truly spiritual mind to resist the conviction, or close the eye to the fact, that inward vital godliness by no means keeps pace with the profession of Christianity which almost universally prevails. A more alarming sign could scarcely appear in the moral history of the world. If the prevalence of a nominal Christianity be one of the predicted and distinct characteristics of the approaching consummation of all things,—if it is to be regarded as the precursor of overwhelming judgments, and as immediately ushering in the coming of the Son of man, then who can contemplate the religious formalism which so generally exists amongst professing Christians without a

feeling of sadness, and the excitement of alarm? Were we duly affected by the spectacle which we see around us, of multitudes substituting signs for things, symbols for realities, an external profession of Christ for the indwelling of Christ, the mere semblance of life for life itself, how should we, sympathising with man, and jealous for the Lord, *sigh and cry*, as those who have God's mark upon their foreheads. Ezek. ix. 4.

It seems but proper that, in a work called forth by this alarming state of the professing Church, and designed to lay open that state in some of its scriptural and figurative delineations, we should commence with a consideration of the nature, properties, and actions, of the spiritual, or inner life, of the quickened soul. It is a self-evident truth, that the absence of spiritual life is but the existence of spiritual death. There is no link that unites the two conditions. A soul is either living or dead. The artificial representation of life is no more real life than a painted sun is the real sun, or than a corpse under powerful galvanic shocks is a living body. The reader will therefore at once perceive that, in entering upon

an inquiry into this state of religious formalism, it is of the greatest moment that we have a clear and distinct idea of that inward, deep, spiritual life, apart from which, with all his intellectual light, orthodox creed, and religious profession, a man is "dead in trespasses and in sins." I know of no words which more distinctly and beautifully bring out this subject than those of the apostle, in referring to his own experience—"I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

The first great truth which the passage suggests is, that every true believer in the Lord Jesus is the subject of an inward, spiritual life—*I live*. It is altogether a new and supernatural existence. The old and the natural state, as we have just affirmed, is a state of *death*. Death! it is a solemn word! Dead! it is an awful state! And yet how difficult to bring a man to a real belief and conviction of this his condition! And why? because he is dead. No argument, no reasoning, no persuasion, however profound or affecting, can convince a corpse that it is lifeless. Equally impossible is it to convince the natural man that his soul is spiritually dead, and that before he can be a true expectant of heaven, an heir

of glory, he must be *born again*, and so become the subject of a new and spiritual life. Indignant at the statement, he rejects, spurns, and deprecates the idea. The reason is, that in pressing home upon him the fact, we are met with death in the judgment, with death in the will, with death in the affections, with death in the whole soul. The original sentence under which every individual of the human family lies is thus recorded—"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die:" in the Hebrew, "Thou shalt die the death." Our parent disobeying this law, died, and in him, as their federal head, died every son and daughter of Adam. "You hath he quickened WHO WERE DEAD. He that hath the Son hath life, but he that hath not the Son of God HATH NOT LIFE." On another occasion Jesus said, "Let the dead bury their dead," i.e. let those who are spiritually dead bury those who are naturally dead. What an appalling condition! The spectacle of a dead body is solemn. The idea of natural death is awful. To see the eye that gleamed with bright intelligence fixed and glazed in death; the lips that spake so kindly, and that discoursed so profoundly,—sealed in unbroken silence; the

countenance whose every feature was radiant with the light of intellect and love, cold and rigid,—how instinctively we shudder at the sight, and recoil from the touch ! But with all the affecting and humiliating circumstances of our natural dissolution, what, in comparison, is this spectacle of a lifeless form of clay with that of the soul *dead in sin* ? With all its intellectual greatness, its splendid genius, its powers of thought, its rich endowments, its varied acquisitions, its creative energies, its brilliant achievements, its religious creed and forms and observances, its *name to live*,—it is yet spiritually dead. Dead to all that is worthy the name of life, dead to every lofty consideration and feeling, purpose and enterprise, in harmony with its creation, and parallel with its endless being. Dead as to any spiritual understanding of God, or knowledge of Christ, or transforming power of the Holy Spirit, or experience of those spiritual exercises, and sacred feelings, and hallowed emotions, and animating hopes, which belong to the soul made *alive unto God*. The question is repeated,—what, with all its attendant circumstances, humiliating and affecting, is the spectacle of a lifeless body, in con-

trast with the spectacle of a lifeless *soul*? We might almost reply—nothing. The dissolution of the body is not the destruction of the soul. The perishing of the material is not the annihilation of the immaterial. Death is not the end of our being; nay, it is not even an interruption of it. It is an event that befalls a man at a certain point of his existence, but it is a change of place and circumstance only, involving the suspension of his immortality—no, not for a moment. How infinitely more momentous, solemn, and appalling, then, is that spiritual state of man which links his future destiny to all the certain horrors of the *second death*! O that this might be a quickening truth, a startling, an arousing reflection to the unconverted reader! What grand impertinences, what mere non-entities, do all other considerations appear in contrast with this! You may lose and recover again everything else but—your soul. This, once lost, is irrecoverably and for ever lost. And have you never paused and reflected upon the probability of your losing it? You are at this moment the subject of spiritual death: in the strong language of the Saviour you are *condemned already*; and the last enemy, with

the funeral pall of your soul in his hands, stands prepared to enshroud you within its dark folds, at the word of Him "in whom you live, and move, and have your being." Does not this affect you, alarm you, arouse you? Spirit of God! who but thyself can quicken the soul? Who can convince of danger, convict of sin, and lead to Christ, but Thee? Speak but the word, and there shall be light. Touch but the soul, and it shall awaken. "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

But, with regard to the great truth before us, we again remark, that every truly gracious man is a *living soul*. He is in the possession of an inner, spiritual life. He can appropriate to himself the words of the apostle—*I live*. The first important characteristic of this spiritual life is its engrafting upon a state of death. The words of the apostle will explain our meaning: "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God," ver. 19. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." Addressing the believing Colossians, he says, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." The simple meaning of these declarations is—the

living soul is dead to the law of God as an instrument of life, and to its works as a ground of salvation. It is dead, too, to the curse and tyranny of the law, and consequently to its power of condemning. To all this, the soul made alive by Christ, is dead with Christ. Thus is it most clear that a man, dead already, though he originally is, in trespasses and in sins, must morally die ere he can spiritually live. The crucifixion with Christ must precede the living with Christ. He must die to all schemes and hopes of salvation in or by himself, before he can fully receive into his heart Christ as the life of his soul. This spiritual mystery, this divine paradox, the natural man cannot understand or receive ; he only can who is "born of the Spirit." Then let me ask and press upon you the personal and searching question, has the law of God been brought into your conscience with that enlightening, convincing, and condemning power, as first to startle you from your spiritual slumber, and then to sever you from all hope or expectation of salvation in yourself ? If so, then will you know of a truth what it is, first, to die before you live. Dying to the law, dying to self, you will receive him into your heart

who so blessedly declared, "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly." Thus is the life of God in the soul engrafted upon a state of death. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live."

The second view of this inner, spiritual life is, its supernatural character. It is above nature, and therefore all the power of nature cannot inspire it. Nature, we admit, can go far in imitating some of its characteristics, but nature cannot create the essential property or principle of this life. Nature can produce a semblance of faith, as in the case of Simon Magus; of repentance, as in the case of Judas; of hearing the word with joy, as in the case of Herod; it can even appear to taste the heavenly gift, and feel the powers of the world to come: all this, and much more, can nature do, and yet be nature still. Here its power stops. There is that which it cannot do. It cannot counterfeit the indwelling of Christ in the sinner's soul. It cannot enable a man to say, "I live, and Christ liveth in me." This infinitely transcends its mightiest power. Spiritual life, then, springs not from nature, and is therefore produced by no natural cause or means. It is from God. He

it is who calls this new creation into being, who pencils its wonders, who enkindles its glories, and who breathes over it the breath of life. It is God's life in man's soul.

Thus the true Christian is one who can adopt the expressive and emphatic language of Paul—*I live*. Amplifying the words, he can exclaim, “*I live*—as a quickened soul. *I live*—as a regenerate soul. *I live*—as a pardoned sinner. *I live*—as a justified sinner. *I live*—as an adopted child. *I live*—as an heir of glory. *I live*, and I never lived before! My whole existence until now has been but as a blank. I never truly, really lived, until I died! I lived, if life it may be called, to the world, to sin, to the creature, to myself; but I never lived by Christ, and I never lived to God.” O tremendous truth! O solemn thought! for a soul to pass away into eternity without having answered the great end of its creation—without having ever really lived! With what feelings, with what emotions, with what plea, will it meet the God who created it? “I created you,” that God will say, “for myself, for my glory. I endowed you with gifts, and ennobled you with faculties, and clothed you with powers second only to my

own. I sent you into the world to expend those gifts, and to employ those faculties, and to exert those powers, for my glory, and with a view to the enjoyment of me forever. But you buried those gifts, you abused those faculties, you wasted those powers, and you lived to yourself and not unto me; and now to yourself, and in everlasting banishment from my presence, you shall continue to live through eternity." Come from the four winds, O breath of the living God, and breathe upon the dead, that they may live! Avert from the reader so dire a doom, so fearful a catastrophe! And permit none, whose eye lights upon this solemn page, any longer to live to themselves, but from this moment and forever, gracious Saviour! may they live for thee—their solemn determination and their sublime motto this—FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST.

But we are now conducted to a great and a most precious truth—the indwelling of Christ in the heart as constituting the spiritual life of the believer. "I live; yet not I, BUT CHRIST LIVETH IN ME." It is not so much that the believer lives, as that Christ lives in the believer. *I in them.* The Lord Jesus is ESSENTIAL LIFE.

Were it not for this, the doctrine of indwelling life would be but a dream. With what authority of tone, and with what sublimity of language, has he affirmed this idea, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Can thought be more grand, or words be more intelligible? "With Thee is the fountain of life." Couple together these two passages, and what demonstrative proof do they afford to the doctrine of the essential Deity of the Saviour. How could he be the *Resurrection and the Life*, and in what sense the *Fountain of Life*, but as he was ESSENTIALLY GOD? No comparison can be instituted between finite being, however exalted, and Infinite. It has been truly said, that all finite beings are infinitely more destitute of life than they are possessed of it; and this will be the case forever. Standing by the grave that entombs the soul dead in sin, ESSENTIAL LIFE exclaims—"I AM *the Resurrection and the Life—Come forth!*" and in a moment the soul is quickened, and rises to *newness of life*. What but DEITY could accomplish this? Take off thy shoes from thy feet, for thou standest upon holy ground! Jesus is the TRUE GOD, and

ESSENTIAL LIFE. The smallest seed, the meanest insect, the lowest creature on earth, and the mightiest angel, and the brightest saint in heaven, draw their life from Christ. All life—vegetable, animal, rational, spiritual—emanates from him, the *Fountain of Life* to all creatures. What a mighty and glorious Being, then, is the Son of God, the ceaseless energy of whose essence prevents each moment every thing that hath life from being destroyed, and from accomplishing its own destruction! Who would not believe in, who would not love, who would not serve such a Being? Who would not crown him *Lord of all*?

The spiritual life, then, of the believer is the life of Christ, or rather, “Christ who is our life” in the soul. The Scripture proof of this is overwhelming. *I in them*, are words declarative of this truth by the Saviour himself. Again, in 2 Cor. xiii. 5, the apostle thus exhorts—“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” Alas! how is this precept overlooked! How few are they who rightly and honestly *examine themselves*! They can ex-

amine others, and speak of others, and hear for others, and judge of others ; but *themselves* they examine not, and judge not, and condemn not. To the neglect of this precept may be traced, as one of its most fruitful causes, the relapse of the inner life of the Christian. Deterioration, and eventually destruction and ruin, must follow in the steps of wilful and protracted neglect, be the object of that neglect what it may. The vineyard must become unfruitful, and the garden must lose its beauty, and the machinery must stand still, and the enterprise must fail of success, and the health must decline, if toilsome and incessant watchfulness and care hath not its eye broad awake to every symptom of feebleness, and to every sign of decay. If the merchantman examine not his accounts, and if the husbandman examine not his field, and if the nobleman examine not his estate, and if the physician examine not his patient, what sagacity is needed to foresee, as the natural and inevitable result, confusion, ruin, and death ? How infinitely more true is this of the soul ! The want of frequent, fearless, and thorough searching into the exact state of the heart, into the real condition of the soul, as before God, in the great

matter of the inner life, reveals the grand secret of many a solemn case of declension, shipwreck, and apostacy. Therefore, the apostle earnestly exhorts, *Examine yourselves*; as if he would say, "Do not take the state of your soul for granted. Be not deceived by the too fond and partial opinion of others. Judge not yourselves by a human and a false standard, but examine yourselves, prove your own selves by the word; and rest not short of Christ dwelling in your hearts,—your present life and your hope of glory."

But how does Christ dwell in the believer?—a most important question this. An ignorance with regard to the mode of Christ's indwelling at one time opened the door for the introduction into the Church of one of the most fanatical errors that ever assailed its purity. We allude to the heresy of the personal, corporeal indwelling of Christ in the believer, which, being believed and asserted by many, they set themselves up as being themselves Christ, and thereby rushed into innumerable extravagant, blasphemous, and deadly sins. Thus has Satan ever sought to engraft the deadly nightshade of error, upon the life-giving Rose of Sharon, ren-

dering the most spiritual and sanctifying truths of God's word subservient to the basest and most unholy purposes. But by what mode does the Lord Jesus dwell in the truly regenerate? We answer,—by his Spirit. Thus it is a spiritual and not a personal or corporeal indwelling of Christ. The Scripture testimony is most full and decisive on this point. “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost? If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” And that this inhabitation of Christ by the Spirit is not the indwelling of a mere grace of the Spirit, but the Spirit himself, is equally clear from another passage:—“Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God (here is a grace of the Spirit) is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which he hath given us”—(here is the possession of the Spirit himself). This is the fountain of all the spiritual grace dwelling in the soul of the truly regenerate, and at times so blessedly flowing forth in refreshing and

sanctifying streams. "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. BUT THIS SPAKE HE OF THE SPIRIT," John vii. 38, 39. Thus, then, is it most clear that by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Christ has his dwelling in the hearts of all true believers. Christian reader, what a solemn truth is this! What an unfolding of true Christianity! What a view of real, vital, saving religion, does this truth present! How do all religious rites, and forms, and ceremonies, dwindle into just and impressive insignificance, before this all-important, all-essential, all-commanding doctrine of the inhabitation of Christ in the soul by the Holy Spirit of God! Apart from the experience of this truth, every other is a *false religion*.

But there is one view of our subject too interesting and important to be overlooked. "Christ LIVETH in me," says the apostle. It is a *living* Christ dwelling in a *living* soul. It implies permanency. The religion of some is a religion of the moment. Like the gourd of the prophet, it appears in a night, and it withers in a night. It is the religion of impulse and of feeling. It comes by fits and starts. It is con-

vulsive and periodical. It is easily assumed, and as easily laid aside. But here is the grand characteristic of a truly converted man. Christ *lives* in him, and lives in him never to die. He has entered his heart, never to retire. He has enthroned himself, never to abdicate. And although the fact of his permanent indwelling may not always appear with equal clearness and certainty to the mind of the believer himself, nevertheless Christ is really there by his Spirit. It is his home, his dwelling-place, his kingdom. He lives there, to maintain his government, to sway his sceptre, and to enforce, by the mild constraint of his love, obedience to his laws. He lives there, to guard and nourish his own work—shielding it when it is assailed, strengthening it when it is feeble, reviving it when it droops, restoring it when it decays; thus protecting the “lily amongst the thorns,” preserving the spark in the ocean, and keeping, amid opposing influences, the life of God that it die not. Truly is the believer in Jesus a *living* soul; and all are dead who cannot say, “Christ LIVETH in me.”

But let us briefly contemplate some of the *characteristics* of the inner spiritual life of the

soul, as more fully illustrating its character, and as supplying evidences by which we may test the question of its personal possession.

The first characteristic which we notice is its *self-renouncing* tendency. *I live*, YET NOT I. The life of Christ and the life of self cannot co-exist in the same heart. If the one lives, the other dies. The sentence of death is written upon a man's self when the Spirit of Christ enters his heart and quickens his soul with the life of God. "I live," he exclaims, "*yet* NOT I." What a striking and beautiful example of this have we in the life and labours of the Apostle Paul. Does he speak of his *ministry*?—what a renunciation of self appears! Lost in the greatness and grandeur of his theme, he exclaims—"We preach NOT OURSELVES, but Christ Jesus the Lord." Again—"Unto ME, WHO AM LESS THAN THE LEAST of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach amongst the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Does he refer to his *office*?—what self-crucifixion! "I magnify mine office." In what way? Was it by vaunting proclamations of its grandeur and legitimacy, its Divine institution, or its solemn functions?

Did he challenge for it, “ otherwise than as it was connected with miraculous endowments, the unquestioning and instant submission of men’s hearts and consciences, as to an oracle that must not be disputed—or their subserviency in the conduct of life, as to a law that was death to disobey? Did he ever exalt its possessors to a height of unintelligible and mystical sacredness, above the condition of humanity and the common feelings and infirmities of nature, which might demand the prostration of others at their feet, as if separated from them by an impassable, though invisible chasm—an abyss which it was sacrilege to traverse even in imagination, and which still divided the priest, the bishop, or the pastor, from the man?” Never! But he magnified his office, by diminishing himself and exalting his Master. He was nothing—ay, and even his office itself was comparatively nothing—that “ Christ might be all and in all.” Does he speak of his *gifts* and *labours*? what absence of self! “ I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But, by the grace of God, I am what I am; and his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was

not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet, NOT I, but the grace of God which was with me." Such was the religion of Paul. His Christianity was a self-denying, self-crucifying, self-renouncing Christianity. "I live, YET NOT I. I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet NOT I." O what a self-denying spirit was his! "But where," asks somewhat quaintly a writer of olden time, —and how appropriate the inquiry to our own! —"where is this self-denying power of heart now to be found amongst us? how does this *I*, this same self, creep into all our speeches, and into all our doings! If it please the Lord to use a minister in his service, what an *I*-ing is there! *I* converted such a man, and *I* comforted such a man; and it was *my* prescription, and it was *my* receipt, and *I* did it. And if a Christian do but pray, or perform a duty, Thus and thus *I* said, and these words *I* spake! did not *I* tell you so? *I* told you what would come to pass. O what an *I*-ing is there among the people! How does this *I* and self creep into all our speeches, and into all our doings!"*

But every truly spiritual man is a self-re-

* Bridge.

nouncing man. In the discipline of his own heart, beneath the cross of Jesus, and in the school of trial and temptation, he has been taught in some degree, that if he lives, it is not he that lives, but that it is Christ who liveth in him. Upon all his own righteousness, his duties, and doings, he tramples as to the great matter of justification; while, as fruits of the Spirit, as evidences of faith, as pulsations of the inner spiritual life, as, in a word, tending to authenticate and advance his sanctification, he desires to be "careful to maintain good works," that *God* in all things might be glorified. This thought suggests another of much importance. We should be always careful to distinguish between the denial of self and the denial of the life of God within us. The most entire renunciation of ourselves, the most humiliating acknowledgment of our personal unworthiness, may comport with the strongest assurance and profession of Christ living in us. Self-denial does not necessarily involve grace-denial. It is the profoundest act of humility in a Christian man to acknowledge the grace of God in his soul. Never is there so real a crucifixion, never so entire a renunciation of self as when

the heart, in its lowly but deep and grateful throbbings, acknowledges its indebtedness to sovereign grace, and in the fervour of its adoring love summons the whole Church to listen to its recital of the great things God hath done for it—"Come, all ye that fear the Lord, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul." O yes! it is a self-denying life. Listen to Job—"I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Listen to Isaiah—"Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Listen to the penitent publican—"God be merciful to me a sinner!" Listen again to Paul—"I live, yet not I." Thus does a sense of sin, and a believing sight of Christ, lay the soul low before God in self-renunciation and self-abhorrence. Judge your spiritual condition, dear reader, by this characteristic of the inner life. Is it yours? Has there been this renunciation of your sinful self, and of your righteous self? Has the Spirit of God emptied you? has the grace of God humbled you? has the life of God crucified you? Are you as one in whom Christ lives, walking humbly with God?

O, it is the essence of vital godliness, it is the very life of true religion. If Christ is living in you, you are a humble soul. Pride never existed in the heart of Christ. His whole life was one act of the profoundest self-abasement. In the truest and in the fullest sense of the emphatic declaration, "he humbled himself." It is impossible, then, that he who was thus "meek and lowly in heart" can dwell in one whom "pride compasseth as a chain." "I live, yet NOT I," are two states of the renewed soul as inseparable as any cause and effect. A humble and a self-denying Christ dwells only with a humble and a self-denying soul. If your gifts inflate you, if your position exalts you, if your usefulness engenders pride, if the honour and distinction which God or man have placed upon you have turned you aside from the simplicity of your walk, and set you upon the work of self-seeking, self-advancing, so that you are not meek and gentle, child-like and Christ-like in spirit, be sure of this—you are either not a partaker of the life of Christ, or else that life is at a low ebb in your soul. Which of the two, think you, is your real state? And have the self-denying, the self-renouncing, no reward?

O yes! their reward is great. They are such as the King delights to honour. When John the Baptist declared, "He must increase, but I must decrease," and on another occasion, "Whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose," Christ pronounced him "the greatest born of women." When the centurion sent to say, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof," our Lord places this crown upon his faith, "I tell you I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." When the publican exclaimed, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" he descended from the temple "justified rather" than the self-vaunting Pharisee. Yes, "when men are cast down then there is lifting up." There is a present reward of grace to the humble. Christ exalts them. "Humble yourselves under the hand of the Lord, and he will exalt you in due time." And what tongue can describe the inward peace, satisfaction, and contentment of that soul in whom this self-denying life of Christ dwells! Such an one hath a *continual feast*. He may be deeply tried, sorely tempted, heavily afflicted, severely chastened, but his meek and submissive spirit exclaims, "It is the Lord, let him do as seemeth good in his sight."

Another characteristic of this life is—it is a Christ-honouring, Christ-advancing life. A self-denying life, proceeding from a gospel principle, must be a Christ-exalting life. The Lord Jesus can only erect and carry forward his kingdom in the soul upon the ruins of self: and as this kingdom of grace is perpetual in its growth, so the demolition of self is a work of gradual advancement. “He must increase,” says the lowly-minded Baptist. As the inner life grows, Christ grows more lovely to the eye, more precious to the heart. His blood is more valued, his righteousness is more relied on, his grace is more lived upon, his cross is more gloried in, his yoke is more cheerfully borne, his commands are more implicitly obeyed. In all things Christ is advanced, and the soul by all means advances in its knowledge of, and in its resemblance to, Christ. Reader, is Christ advanced by you? Is his kingdom widened, is his truth disseminated, is his fame spread, is his person exalted, is his honour vindicated, is his glory promoted by the life which you are living? O name not the name of Christ if it be not to perfume the air with its fragrance, and

to fill the earth with its renown. We must group the remaining characteristics of the inner life. It is a *conflicting* life. It always wears the harness, and is ever clothed with the armour. Opposed by indwelling sin, assailed by Satan, and impeded by the world, every step in advance is only secured by a battle fought and a victory achieved. It is a *holy* life—springing from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, it must necessarily be so. All its actings are holy, all its breathings are holy, all its fruits are holy; and without *holiness* no man hath this life, or can be an inheritor of that life to come, of which this is the seedling and the germ, the foretaste and the pledge. “The water that I shall give him,” says Christ, alluding to the spiritual life, “shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” Need I add that *happiness*, *progrcssion*, and *deathlessness*, are equally its characteristics? Happiness is but a phantom and a name, where Christ dwells not in the heart. Progression is but an advance towards eternal woe, where the love of God is not in the soul. And death is an eternal, lingering despair, the soul and body ever dying,

yet never ceasing to exist—where the Spirit of life has not quickened the inner man, creating all things new.

Such, reader, is the life, the inner, spiritual, and deathless life, the relapse and recovery of which, the pages that follow will unfold. No imagination can fully depict, nor language adequately describe, the importance of this life, the grandeur of its nature and destiny, and the necessity of its progression and its manifestations. Reader, the world without you teems with sentient existence. All is life, activity, and progress. There is vegetable life, and animal life, and rational life. The flower that scents the air with its perfume, the insect that renders it vocal with its music, and man who fills and beautifies the earth with monuments of his greatness and creative genius, testify to the possession of a life of amazing power, activity, and progression. To this may be added a species of moral life, maintained by many, developed and embodied in religious forms, observances, and sacrifices. But there is a life as infinitely superior to all these as the life of him whose mind conceived the towering pyramid, is to that of the little insect that flutters its brief hour in the sunbeam

and then vanishes for ever. It is THE LIFE OF GOD IN THE SOUL OF MAN. Deep planted in the centre of his spiritual nature, lodged within the hidden recesses of his deathless mind, diffusing its mysterious but all-pervading and renovating influence through the judgment, the will, the affections, and linking his being with a future of glory, "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive," the world rushes on, and knows not its existence, and sees not its glories, and heeds not its joy,—so deeply veiled from human eye, ay, and so far removed from human power, is the inner spiritual life "hidden with Christ in God." Reader, there is a religion towering as far above your religion of merit, and of works, and of forms, as the heavens are above the earth, even as the spiritual life of God is above the sensual life of man. It is the religion of a renewed mind, of a renovated heart, of a conquered will, of a soul—all whose sanctified faculties are consecrated to the glory of God here, and are destined to the enjoyment of God hereafter. Illustrious as may be your position in the Church, luminous as may be your profession of Christianity, splendid as your

gifts, and rich as your endowments, and costly as your offerings, and apostolic as your zeal, and unwearied as your labours may be, bear with me while with all solemnity I remind you, that you still may live, and toil, and die, a stranger to the INNER LIFE. Deeper and loftier and more momentous than all these is the great truth upon which we are expatiating—"CHRIST LIVETH IN ME." Its foundation is in the soul, its summit is in heaven. I enunciate to you a great mystery—the mystery of Christ and his Church, of the soul of man and the life of God—both spiritually and indissolubly one. Have *you* thus "passed from death unto life?" Has the great transformation taken place? Has the destroyer, intrenched within, in all the plenitude of undisputed power, been dispossessed? Have the avenues of the heart, closed and barred against the admission of Christ, been thrown open? Has the fearful alienation, and the withering curse, and the deep guilt, which portrays to you God as an enemy, and which arms all the powers of your soul against him as his foe, been revealed, felt, and deplored? Has the captive spirit been disenthralled, the prey taken from the mighty, the power of the destroyer

broken, and the soul awakened from its deep slumber to listen to its Creator speaking in tones of mercy, and in thoughts of love? Has light, emanating from the abodes of glory—invisible to others—dawned upon the midnight of your moral desolation? has a voice, speaking from the throne of heaven—unheard by others—startled your spirit in its deep trance, and dispelled its floating dreams? has a hand, mighty and unseen, riven the chain, thrown open the dungeon, and led you forth to liberty and joy, to life and immortality? In a word—and this is the sum and consummation of all—has another and a Diviner life, a new and a superior nature, descending from God, and begotten within you by the Spirit, and unfolding to your view a heaven of brightness, full of purity and fragrance and song, been communicated to your soul, thus creating you a *new creature*, and constituting you an “heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ Jesus?” If so, then you may adopt the language of Paul, and exultingly exclaim, “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” O deem not this a vain thing, for *it is your life!* But I will suppose your honest reply to these searching interrogatives

decides the case against your claims to a possession of spiritual life; then let me beseech you, with a knowledge of this alarming fact, rest not where you are. What is your natural life but a vapour that is soon dissolved, a dream that vanishes away? And what are your present pursuits but things unworthy of your rational existence, and inappropriate to your approaching destiny? O what egregious folly, O what moral insanity, to merge all consideration of your future existence in the present brief space graciously allotted you for its study and its preparation! You are all life, all nerve, all animation, all ardour, all activity, all excitement, all hope, to whatever is noble, and intellectual, and refined, and enterprising, of earth,—but all death, all insensibility, all indifferent, all languor, all hopeless, to every thought and feeling and consideration of the great things that relate to your state beyond the grave. Is this wise, is this rational, is this sane? Your walks of literature, your pleasures of taste, your pursuit of gain, your toil of ambition,—those splendid impertinences, those cruel mockeries, those heartless soul-murderers of the present time-state, stifle in your heart all feeling, and annihilate in

your mind all thought that you are an accountable steward, a moral agent, a deathless being; and that soon, yea, in *one moment*, your soul may be in eternity—standing agitated, trembling and speechless, before the tribunal of God! Yearning for your salvation, let me with the tenderest affection and the deepest solemnity plead with you *for your life*. Reflect for a moment what your present careless, unbelieving and impenitent state really is. It is nothing less than to challenge the vengeance of the Most High God, to defy his power, to disdain his clemency, to refuse his compassion, to reject his pardon, to insult his majesty, and to expose yourself to the fierceness of his eternal wrath. It is to be without the regeneration of his Spirit, to have no part in the propitiation of his Son, to have all your sins uncanceled, and to stand before the throne of eternal justice, a culprit and a criminal, upon whom the righteous judgment of God must pronounce and execute its withering sentence of an unchanging destiny, and an inexorable doom. Whither, then, can you flee to hide you from the dark storm that gathers over you, from the thick clouds, and treasured

lightning, and embosomed bolt, and desolating winds; that wait but the signal of God's uplifted hand to rush forth upon you in all their unchecked, unmitigated fury? Whither can you flee? You have "made a covenant with death, and are at an agreement with hell." You are fascinated with the world, and are enamoured with yourself, and are satisfied to have no other portion. You reject the Rock of Ages, refuse the sheltering pavilion of the Saviour's cross, and despise the proffers of his grace,—whither, then, when the tempest leaps forth in all its maddening fury, will you flee? Yet how calmly you tread upon the very brink of ruin, how sportively you sail along the very edge of the vortex, how content and happy to course your way to the bar of a holy and a just God, through a world of disease and casualty and death, without one anxious thought to obtain deliverance, or one earnest struggle to escape your doom! Listen to a fact of recent occurrence, for the truth of which, in all its awful particulars, my personal knowledge of the parties can safely vouch. The conversation of a party of gentlemen, after dinner, turned upon the doctrine of a future state. Each one gave his

opinion. It came to the turn of an elderly gentleman, a man of high legal attainments, of considerable wealth, and general esteem. He remarked that, "as it regarded himself, this life was good enough for him; that he desired no better, and would be willing to enter into an agreement to live in this world for ever." The words had scarcely passed his lips when his hand relaxed its hold upon the glass it was grasping, his countenance changed, his head drooped, and he was borne insensible to a sofa. A vein was opened, restoratives were used, and every effort made that skill could devise; but life was extinct,—his spirit had fled to the God who gave it! Reader, I leave this appalling fact to make its own impression. May that impression be deep, permanent, and saving!

But I turn to the living. I address those in whose souls are the deep, holy, deathless throbbings of an inner, spiritual life. Blissful day, Christian reader, that witnessed your resurrection from the grave of sin to walk in *newness of life*! Happy hour when you left your soul's shroud in the tomb, exchanging it for the robe of a glorious deathlessness,—when your enmity was conquered, and your

hostility was subdued, and you were led in willing and joyous captivity, amidst the triumphs of your Lord, to the altar where he bled,—self-consecrated to his service. O memorable moment, when Jesus, by the resistless but gentle power of his grace, broke down every barrier, entered your heart, and planted there the germ of a life as Divine, as holy, and as immortal as his own ! Ever keep in mind your deep indebtedness to sovereign grace, your solemn obligation to Divine love, and the touching motives that urge you to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” Welcome all the dealings of God, whatever the character of those dealings may be, designed as they are but to animate, to nourish, and to carry forward this precious life in your soul. The *north wind* of sharp trial, and the *south wind* of covenant mercy, are made to breathe their blended gales over this beautiful garden, that the fruits and flowers of holiness may abound,—that the actings of a living faith and love and hope may evidence to yourself, to the Church, and to the world, that you are indeed “risen with Christ,” a partaker of his new resurrection-life.

It is perhaps a question of deep anxiety with you,—“Would that I knew I were in reality a possessor of this inner spiritual life! My heart is so hard, my affections are so cold, my spirit is so sluggish, in every thing that is spiritual, holy, and divine.” Permit me to ask you, Can a stone feel its hardness, or a corpse its insensibility? Impossible! You affirm that you feel your hardness, and that you are sensible of your coldness. From whence does this spring but from *life*? Could you weep, or mourn, or deplore, were the spiritual state of your soul that of absolute death! Again I say, Impossible! But rest not here—*go to Jesus*. What you really need is a fresh view of, a renewed application to, the Lord Jesus Christ. Sit not brooding over your mournful condition, in fruitless lamentation, but rise, and *go to Jesus*. Take to him the stone-like heart, the corpse-like soul. Tell him that you want to feel more, and to weep more, and to love more, and to pray more, and to live more. Go, and pour out your heart, with all its tremblings, and doubts, and fears, and wants, upon the bleeding, loving bosom of your Lord, until from that bosom life more

abundant has darted its quickening energy, vibrating and thrilling through your whole soul. "I have come," says Jesus, "that they might have life, and that they might have it *more abundantly.*"

You are, perhaps, a severely tried, a sorely tempted, a deeply afflicted believer. But cheer up! You have Christ living in you, and why should you yield to despondency or to fear? Christ will never vacate his throne, nor relinquish his dwelling. You have a suffering Christ, a humbled Christ, a crucified Christ, a dying Christ, a risen Christ, a living Christ, a triumphant Christ, a glorified Christ, a full Christ, dwelling in you by his Spirit. Yes! and you have, too, a human Christ, a feeling Christ, a sympathising Christ, a tender, loving, gentle Christ, spiritually and eternally reposing in your heart,—why, then, should you fear the pressure of any want, or the assault of any foe, or the issue of any trial, since such a Christ is in you? "Fear not!" They are his own familiar and blessed words—"It is I, be not afraid." You cannot want for any good, since you have the fountain of all good dwelling in you. You cannot be finally overcome of any

spiritual evil, since you have the Conqueror of sin and Satan and the world enthroned upon your affections. Your life,—the inner, divine and spiritual life—can never die, since Christ, ESSENTIAL LIFE, liveth and abideth in you. Like him, and for him, you may be opposed, but like him and by him you shall triumph. The persecution which you meet, and the trials which you endure, and the difficulties with which you cope, shall but further your well-being, by bringing you into a closer communion with Jesus, and by introducing you more fully into the enviable state of the apostles—“ Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For which cause we faint not: but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

Soon the portals of glory will expand their gates, and receive you into the beatific life—the life which is eternal. You are, perhaps, mourning the loss of those who sleep in Jesus, or you are the occupant of a sick chamber, or,

—ecstatic thought!—it may be you are poised upon the wing for heaven, waiting only the signal for your upward flight. Whether it be the sorrow of bereavement, or the languishing bed of sickness, or the immediate prospect of eternity, how appropriate, and animating, and soothing, the contemplation of the life which is before you! How exceeding great and precious are the promises which refer to the security and assured enjoyment of that life: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all: and no one is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” Listen to his words of indescribable sweetness and overwhelming grandeur, breathed over the grave of one whom he loved: “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever believeth in me shall never die.” “Enough, dear Lord,” may you not exclaim. “Thou hast spoken words of soothing and of hope to this bleeding, sorrowing heart of mine, and I am comforted. Thou hast dried my

tears, bound up my wounds, and calmed my spirit, healing, and hushing it to rest upon thine own gentle, loving bosom—once stricken with a sorrow infinitely deeper, and keener, and bitterer than mine.”

Are you, my reader, a searcher of this life? Are you breathing for it, panting after it, seeking it? Then, be it known to you, that he who inspired that desire is himself the Life for which you seek. That heaving of thy heart, that yearning of thy spirit, that ‘feeling after God, if haply you may find him,’ is the first gentle pulsation of a life that shall never die. Feeble and fluctuating, faint and fluttering, as its throbbings may be, it is yet the life of God, the life of Christ, the life of glory in your soul. It is the seedling, the germ of an immortal flower. It is the sunshine dawn of an eternal day. The announcement with which we meet your case—and it is the only one that can meet it—is, “THIS MAN RECEIVETH SINNERS.” O joyful tidings! O blessed words! Yes, he receiveth sinners—the vilest, the meanest, the most despised! It was for this he relinquished the abodes of heavenly purity and bliss, to mingle amidst the sinful and humiliating scenes

of earth. For this he quitted his Father's bosom for a cross. For this he lived and laboured, suffered and died. "He receiveth sinners!" He receives them, of every name and condition—of every stature, and character, and clime. There is no limit to his ability to pardon, as there is none to the sufficiency of his atonement, or to the melting pity of his heart. Flee, then, to Jesus the crucified. To him repair with your sins, as scarlet and as crimson, and his blood will wash you whiter than snow. What though they may be as clouds for darkness, or as the sand on the sea-shore for multitude—his grace can take them all away. Come with the accusations and tortures of a guilty conscience, come with the sorrow and relentings of a broken heart, come with the grief of the backslider, and with the confession of the prodigal, Jesus still meets you with the hope-inspiring words—"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Then, "return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Such, reader, in conclusion, is the nature, and such the manifestations of the inner spirit-

ual life, whose relapse and recovery, whose declensions and revivings, we are about to consider. Alas! that a life so heavenly and divine, so holy and so happy, should ever fluctuate and change—should ever droop and decay. Alas! that in its onward progress to the paradise of God, it should have its autumn and its winter—the seared leaf and the congealed current—and not be always clothed with the perpetual verdure of spring, and be ever laden with the ripe fruit of summer. But such is the fallen nature in which it dwells, and such the hostile influences by which it is surrounded and assailed, the utmost vigilance is demanded to maintain the heavenly spark alive and glowing in the soul. Ere, beloved reader, we pass to a more minute examination of our important subject, together let us solemnly “bow our knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” praying “that he would grant us, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man: that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith: that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love

of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fulness of God. NOW UNTO HIM THAT IS ABLE TO DO EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK, ACCORDING TO THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US, UNTO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH, BY CHRIST JESUS, THROUGHOUT ALL AGES, WORLD WITHOUT END. AMEN."

CHAPTER II.

THE INNER LIFE IN ITS GRADUAL AND IMPERCEPTIBLE RELAPSE.

GRAY HAIRS.

*"Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not ;
yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth
it not."*—Hos. vii. 9.

SUCH is the graphic and mournful description of that peculiar state of backsliding which must be regarded as the most dangerous and alarming, because the most insidious and concealed, of all processes of spiritual relapse from God. It is not a surprisal into sin, a sudden fall before the power of a strong temptation, a stolen march of the enemy upon the tardy steps of the celestial traveller—a *man overtaken by a fault*—but it is the slow, gradual, yet certain relapse of the inner life, lulling all suspicion of its existence, and veiling itself from the most searching eye. Having its original in the Jewish Church, it will not yet

be difficult to point out the strong resemblance of this moral portrait to a large portion of the Christian Church in the present day—professors of religion, office-bearers, sentinels upon the outposts of the camp, workmen upon the scaffolding of the building, in whose souls this species of spiritual attenuation and decay of the Divine life may be proceeding, like the footfall of death, stealthy and unsuspected; or like the progress of age, gradual and unobserved. “Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not.” Deeply and solemnly impressed with this consideration, we propose to spread before the Christian professor several distinct views of this state of spiritual relapse, each one unveiling a new symptom, and presenting a new phase of the disease. Having in the preceding chapter explained the nature of the inner life of the believer, and glanced at its tendency to decay, we now proceed with a more minute analysis of our subject. May the Holy Spirit be our teacher! May we be kept from

unprofitable speculation, and from all trifling with a case so desperate, and with a theme so momentous ! May an unction from the Holy One impart a searching, personal, and sanctifying application of the truth to our hearts !

The first idea which the passage suggests is that of *spiritual loss*. "Strangers have devoured his strength." The existence of real strength in the soul is here supposed. All spiritual declension in the true believer necessarily implies the actual possession of grace. We must not lose sight of this truth. Never, in the lowest condition of the believer, does Christ deny his own work in the soul. "Thou hast a little strength," are his heart-melting words to the backsliding Church in Sardis. O what a gracious, long-suffering Saviour is ours ! But there is a real loss affirmed. It may be proper to inquire what are some of these *strangers* that devour the spiritual strength of the believer.

The *world* may be quoted as a prominent and formidable one. The world is a strange thing to a child of God. It is but his temporary dwelling, not his home ; the inn at which he tarries for a night, not his abiding-place ; his path, rough and perilous, to his

Father's house. It is a strange world to one who is born of God. Its principles are strange, its policy is strange, its maxims are strange its pleasures are strange, its religion is strange, its entire genius and inhabitants are strange to him whose citizenship is of heaven, and whose treasure and heart are there. He sojourns in it, he passes through it only as a *stranger and pilgrim*. And yet—melancholy truth!—this *stranger* devours the spiritual strength of many a Christian professor! The power which the ungodly world still maintains over the renewed mind, and the influence which it exerts in modifying and deteriorating the religion of many professing Christians, is of an appalling character. I am solemnly convinced that the *world*, in its relation to the religion of the day, is the giant snare and the crying evil of our times. It is not the world in one form only, but the world in its many shapes, its numerous forms of fascination and power, which gives it so amazing and subtle an influence over the Christian Church. Were the onset of the world from one quarter only, familiarity with its mode of attack, and experience gathered from its past assaults, might place the Chris-

tian upon his guard. But, like the impersonation of vice, portrayed by Solomon, its "ways are moveable, and cannot be known." There is no shape it cannot assume, no garb it will not wear, no plea it may not urge, no concession it is not prepared to yield, thus to obtain the ascendancy over the Christian's mind. Alas! the infidel expediency of the day, and the compromising character of the prevailing religious profession, present but little obstruction, and offer but faint resistance, to its rapid and alarming encroachments. There is every thing in the easy Christianity of the times to court, and but little to discourage, the advances of the world upon the Church—impairing its strength, crippling its efforts, and shading its lustre. The facile compliance with its solicitations, the inordinate attachment to its principles, the sinful conformity to its customs, the humiliating participation in its pleasures, form the grand secret of the dwarfish religion of so many who ought to have arrived at the "stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus." This strange world has devoured their spiritual strength, and thus the life of God in their souls is stunted in its growth, and they are but infants

when they ought to be men—dwarfs when they should be giants in knowledge, in grace, and in holiness. The policy of the world—the gay enjoyments of the world—the self-indulgence of the world—the soaring ambition of the world—the vain-glory of the world—the sinful alliances of the world—the covetous, grasping desires of the world—the love of vain show and fondness for dress—and the easy religion of the world—are the fearful and fatal snares into which many professing Christians are drawn. The ball—the quadrille party—the concert—the novel—the whist—the drama—O how do these things *devour* the little strength that some seem to possess; to what small dimensions do they contract their Christianity; how do they wither and shrivel up their religion, reducing their moral power of resistance to an infant's weakness! Professor of religion! can you cross the broad separating line between the Church and the world, can you transact business with it for a day, or participate in its pleasures for an hour, and come forth with the locks of your spiritual strength as thick and flowing as before? Impossible! You have suffered a real loss; and you cannot but be

sensible of it. There is an exhaustion in the soul, a wound in the conscience, a deadness in the spirit, a vagrancy of thought, an indolence and listlessness of mind, with feelings which partake more of earth and less of heaven, which unfit you for communion with God, incapacitate you for any spiritual duties whatever, and leave you, like Samson despoiled of his glory, the victim and the sport of the uncircumcised Philistines. “Art thou also become weak as we are? art thou become like unto us?” is the exclamation of the world that has thus cruelly robbed you of your vigour, and now exultingly taunts you with your loss. O! it is “for this cause many are weak and sickly, and many sleep.” I repeat it with earnestness and in bitterness of soul—the *world*—the WORLD is the deadly foe, and *worldliness* is the crying sin of the Church of God. This is the great hindrance to the success of the Christian ministry, and the growth in grace of many who are “called to be saints.” You *profess* to have separated yourselves from the world, to be not of the world, and by the cross of Jesus to be dead to the world; and yet how opposite and falsifying is your *practice*! You mix up with

the world, you float down the stream with the world, you woo and embrace the world ; and but for the enrolment of your name upon the records of the Church, and your punctilious appearance at the communion table of the Lord, we should scarcely suspect that you were a follower of him who solemnly and emphatically declared, “ My kingdom is not of *this world*.”

But, take warning ! Upon this rock numbers who once walked outwardly with Jesus, have made shipwreck of faith, and walk with him no more. One of the most heart-affecting sentences the apostle ever penned was the record of such a case : “ Demas hath forsaken me, *having loved this present world*.” He was a professed Christian, was baptized as a believer, and was the companion and associate of the apostle. But he loved the world, and loving the world he forsook the apostle ; and forsaking the apostle he forsook Christ ; and forsaking Christ he forsook the way of holiness, the way of happiness, the way of heaven. And where is he now ! No mention is made of his restoration. No record is left of his return as a penitent to the cross. All that we know of his melancholy history is a solemn warning to professors to

shun the world, and to beware of worldliness, as the foe and the bane of their religion. O, listen to the faithful yet tender pleadings of the Spirit—"Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed in the spirit of your mind. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away." Listen to the words which warn you against contracting unholy alliances, either in the way of business or of marriage, with the people of the world—"Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Christian professors! can you resist these touching appeals? Will you not retire from

their perusal, resolved, that “by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,” from henceforth you will “keep yourselves unspotted from the world?”

Again, with increased earnestness we beseech you, love not the world—imitate not the world—go not needlessly into the world! It is a cruel, treacherous, soul-destroying world. It crucified your Lord, and seeks nothing less than your eternal destruction. Come out of it, and let your unearthly principles, and holy enjoyments, and heavenly mindedness, and simplicity of walk, integrity and uprightness in all your transactions with the world, be a witness against it for God, for Christ, and for eternity. Labour for its good, pray for it, be kind and gentle to it, and, if need be, suffer for it; but let your daily motto be—the mark of Christ upon your forehead—“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

The unsubdued power of indwelling sin must be regarded as occasioning the Christian severe spiritual loss. Even where there is the absence of that outward worldly conformity of which we have been speaking, there may yet

be the prevalency of unmortified corruption in the heart, secretly and silently, but effectually undermining the fabric of the soul's strength. Alas! how effectually does this 'stranger' devour the vigour of our faith, the fervour of our love, the power of our prayers, the simplicity of our confidence in God. In how many sad instances of secret declension, of outward backsliding, and of avowed apostacy from God, may the evil be traced to this cause! Sin dwells in the heart of the most deeply sanctified, is ever at work in the most eminent Christian; and it has been truly remarked, that the best of saints have need to be warned against the worst of sins. Where there is not, then, a perpetual battle with this hidden foe, a constant mortification through the Spirit of this deep-seated, veiled corruption, the most dire and mournful consequences must ensue. Hence the agitation of doubts and fears, the drooping wing of faith, the powerlessness of the promises, the unanswered prayers, the plague in the camp, the ship in the storm,—the Achan and the Jonah. Nothing enfeebles a Christian man like this. No 'stranger' devours his strength more voraciously and effectually. It closes the

heart to the fruitful reception of the word, and shuts up heaven to the dew and the rain of the Spirit's grace. The idol of the soul still occupies its niche, and is enthroned upon its pedestal; and so long as it is not deposed and removed, the Spirit retires, God ceases to answer prayer, and there is no profitable trading between the soul and heaven, and no refreshment flowing through the channel of means and ordinances. These are solemn words: "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their faces; should I be inquired of at all by them? Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols," Ezek. xx. 31. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." "Strangers have devoured his strength."

But in what does this mortification of sin consist? We reply, in nothing less than the

drying up of its fountain, the destruction of its root. The great evil and power of sin lies in the sin of our nature, *the body of death* which we bear about with us. And herein consists true mortification—the slaying of the principle from whence all sin proceeds; the subduing of the original corruption, the strength of which weakens the actings of grace, by impairing the principle of grace. O, then, be earnest in seeking this attainment! Be not content to arrest the stream while the fountain runs; nor to sever the branches while the root remains. But going to the source of the evil, descending to the depth of the corruption, begin the holy work where the potency of sin mainly lies. What is your predominant sin?—lay the axe at its root. Seek its death and destruction, or it will be death and destruction to you, as long as it prevails. It must bring a deathliness into the life of God within you, and prove the ruin of your peace and joy and happiness. “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” O, then, take this ‘stranger’ which seeks to

devour your strength, to the cross of Jesus, and transfix it there; and as it dies, your soul shall live. Nothing but the cross of Jesus will prove its death, and your life. “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live.” There must be the crucifixion before the life. Christ’s death for sin must be our death unto sin. No mere outward mortification, no fastings, nor self-inflictions, nor painful austerities, will ever weaken the principle or mortify the root of sin. Nothing but faith in the atoning blood of the Son of God can effectually meet the case. Far be it from me to speak indifferently of that *aid* to the mortification of in-being sin which God’s word encourages. I would not lightly esteem, as auxiliary to faith in the atonement, the diligent reading of the word—frequent meditation upon its truths,—seasons of retirement from others, and from surrounding objects—private communion with God—self-examination—self-judging, and honest, minute confession of sin. Nor would I overlook the immense blessing which often flows from deep affliction, from painful, bitter trial, traced in the deeper mortification of sin in the temper, spirit, and life of the true believer. But in this

great and solemn work our constant motto must be, "Looking unto Jesus." Without the eye of faith upon the cross, apart from the efficacy of the atoning blood, and the power of the grace that is in Jesus, there can be no effectual progress in the real work of sanctification. One sight of a crucified Saviour imparted by the Holy Spirit will more effectually weaken the power of indwelling sin than all other means combined. O the might of the cross! O the virtue of the blood! O the power of the grace of Jesus to crucify, cleanse, and subdue our iniquities! Suffer not this 'stranger,' then, any longer to devour your strength, seeing Jesus can enable you to oppose it, and will crown your sincere and persevering opposition with a certain and glorious victory. "He will *subdue* our iniquities."

Spiritual *decay* is another idea suggested by the expressive figure of the passage—"Gray hairs are here and there upon him." These 'gray hairs' are decided evidences of backsliding. And what are some of them? What are a few of the more marked symptoms of spiritual decay in the soul? *A lessened appreciation of Jesus* is a clear and affecting evidence of spirit-

ual relapse. Once he was, in your estimation, “the chief amongst ten thousand.” He was the sovereign of your hearts. ‘His name was as ointment poured forth.’ He was to you as the “apple tree of the wood.” You “sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to your taste.” His cross attracted you, his love constrained you, his voice charmed you, his person was all your admiration, and his work all your boast. O how precious was Jesus to you then! You never thought his yoke irksome, nor his burden heavy, nor his cross painful. No time spent with him was deemed lost; no sacrifice made for him was counted costly; no labour for him was wearisome; no shame, or ignominy, or suffering for his sake, was worthy of a thought. The secret of all was—you loved the Saviour with a deep and intense affection. But the ‘gray hair’ has appeared! Jesus is less precious to you now. Reverse the picture, just drawn of your former self, and you have the faithful portrait of your soul’s present state! Your love has waxed cold, the ardour of your affection has waned, your heart is divided, other objects have displaced the

Saviour ; and if you follow him at all, it is like Peter, “ a great way off.” Is not *this* real decay? “ Gray hairs are here and there upon him.”

Another symptom is, *neglected prayer*. I will not say that the habit of prayer is entirely relinquished ; but the spirit and fervour of prayer seem greatly to have evaporated. The time was when communion with God was the element in which you lived. You could more conveniently live without your daily food, and even pass your nights without sleep, than live without prayer, or compose yourself to rest without converse with God. That was registered as a lost day which found you holding no filial intercourse with your Heavenly Father—spending no blissful moments with Jesus. O happy days ! How precious their memory ! How sanctifying their recollection ! Then, your walk was with God—your “ fellowship truly was with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.” You were wont to take every thing to the throne of grace. As your wants came, you told your Father ; and as your sorrow was felt, you laid it upon Jesus. You walked with God in every thing, the most minute, in your history. And O what an opening was there of

the heart of God to you at the mercy-seat ! More truly, and how much more fully, was God wont to realise to you the promise to Moses—“ There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat.” But the ‘ gray hair ’ is seen—sad symptom of decay in prayer. As to frequency and power, earnestness and success—as to any real communion, any filial, confidential opening of the heart to God, there is a palpable and melancholy falling off. Weak in prayer, you have no longer power with the Angel of the Covenant to prevail. Is not *this* decay ? “ Gray hairs are here and there upon him.” .

The neglect of confession is an undoubted symptom of a state of soul backsliding from God. Perhaps there is not one more strongly indicative of the true decay of grace in the heart than this. When the habit of a contrite acknowledgment of sin is cherished, when a daily confession over the head of the atoning Sacrifice is made, and the blood is thus constantly sprinkled upon the conscience, the soul maintains, even in its advance to the “ stature of the perfect man,” all the vigour and beauty of youthful piety. There is a freshness and verdure

which distinguish the soul in close proximity to the open Fountain. But the "gray hair" betrays a change in this holy habit. It is now almost entirely neglected ; or, if not quite abandoned, is yet performed in so careless and partial a manner, as to rob it of all its power, and neutralise all its efficacy. Your acknowledgment of sin is so general and heartless, blended with so imperfect a view of the turpitude of the sin confessed, with so feeble a sense of holy, humble contrition—in a word, the true spirit and posture of confession are so entirely absent, as to deprive the whole performance of its character, and to render it of none effect. This was not always the state of your soul. In times that are past, the least sin gave you distress, the slightest speck upon the conscience made you uneasy, and you could not rest until you had told it to the Lord, and had sought and found a renewed application of the peace-speaking blood. Surely this is a manifest decay of grace in your soul. "Gray hairs are here and there upon him."

A slighting of the means of grace, and the ordinances of God's house, is not the least mark of a state of heart-backsliding. How 'green'

were these 'pastures' once to your soul! How you hailed the arrival of the hour that took you to them! How you delighted to walk and feed in them! To have neglected the assembling of the saints—to have refused to meet them for praise and prayer—as, alas! the manner of some is—to have turned your back upon the house of God, upon the ministry of the word, upon the ordinance of the Lord's supper, upon the hour of social prayer, would have filled your heart with inexpressible pain. But, ah! you can do so now without an emotion! Your place is often vacant in the sanctuary—at the Lord's table—and when others meet to promote the kingdom of Christ; and yet your absence creates in your heart no sense of loss, and awakens in your conscience no alarm nor sorrow. The preached word, when you are in attendance, does not profit you. You have lost your relish for a Christ-exalting, soul-awakening, soul-winning, soul-searching, soul-loving ministry, and can only tolerate that service which intones its lullaby to your drowsy spirit, or deepens the slumber in which you are profoundly locked. To this we must add,—your sad lack of sympathy for the salvation of others. Ah! what can

more truly betray the real condition of your own soul than your cruel, criminal apathy, in view of the multitudes perishing around you without the 'vision,' each one raising that wail of agony, as it passes away—"No man cared for my soul!" These are some of the "gray hairs" which indicate a weakening and decay of the kingdom of God within the soul.

But there is one feature of this state of back-sliding brought out by the prophet which we must not overlook. I allude to the ignorance and insensibility which mark it. "Strangers have devoured his strength, and *he knoweth it not*; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, *yet he knoweth it not*." It is by slow and imperceptible degrees that time steals upon us. Old age never surprises a man. We are not young to-day, and old to-morrow. To-day, revelling in all the life, elasticity, and buoyancy of youth—and to-morrow, suffering from all the melancholy effects of senility. But we grow old by degrees: "Gray hairs are here and there upon us, and we know it not." Thus is it with the progress of spiritual declension. A Christian professor may lose the power and freshness of grace in his soul, and for a time not be sensi-

ble of his loss. This I consider to be the most alarming symptom of his case. For a man to be going further and further from God, losing ground every moment, the 'gray hairs' thickening around him while he continues insensible to his condition—supposing that all is prosperous with his soul, when all is the very reverse,—is alarming in the extreme. The case of Samson, already alluded to, fully illustrates this trait. While in a state of slumber we read that his wife Delilah "called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him." How soon the strong man had become weak! Strangers had devoured his strength, and he knew it not! Thus is it with many a Christian professor. Asleep upon the lap of some sinful self-indulgence, his enemies come upon him and sever the locks in which his might lay—and he knoweth not that the Lord has departed from him.

You are ignorant, too, of the great *extent* of your backsliding from God. You are not aware how far you have gone, what a fearful breach has been made between God and your soul, what a distance has come between Jesus and your spirit. You are not sensible how many steps you will have to retrace before you recover what you once so blissfully possessed,—the presence of God, the witness of the Spirit, the consciousness of your being a pardoned sinner, an adopted child. There is, too, an alarming unconcern as to your state. It becomes a matter of very little moment, whether God sees in you a growing conformity to his image, or a growing conformity to the world. You have been robbed of the locks of your strength, and either you do not know it, or are coldly indifferent to it.

But let us, in closing, briefly trace this melancholy state to some of its *causes*, that we may be better able to point out its appropriate *remedy*.

The first cause undoubtedly is, *the unguarded state of your soul*. A merchant or a tradesman accustomed to neglect his accounts through the year must be prepared to find himself at its close in a state of embarrassment and uncer-

tainty as to his actual position—his affairs bordering perhaps on a state of insolvency. A Christian living in the daily neglect of self-examination must not marvel if, at a certain period of his religious course, he finds himself trembling upon the brink of gloomy despondency, his evidences gone, his hope obscured, and all the past of his Christian profession appearing to his view as a fearful delusion. But here let me suggest the cure. Examine before God the real state of your soul. Ascertain where you have lost ground. Retrace your way. Look honestly and fairly at your condition. Be not appalled at it. Discouraging and repelling as it may appear, look it fully in the face, and lay it open before God exactly as it is, in the spirit and language of the Psalmist—"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

I quote the *grieving of the Spirit of God* as a most fruitful cause of your present state of spiritual relapse. We have yet much to learn of our entire dependence upon the Holy Spirit, and of our eternal obligation to him for all

the blessings of which he is the author and the conveyancer. What themes for grateful contemplation to the spiritual mind are the love of the Spirit—the faithfulness of the Spirit—the tenderness of the Spirit—the grace of the Spirit—the long-suffering of the Spirit! And yet, in the long catalogue of the believer's backslidings, not the least is, his grieving this Holy Spirit of God. To this must be traced that barrenness and unfruitfulness, that premature decay, those spiritual relapses, which impart a death-like, skeleton appearance, to the Christianity of so many of its professors. Their worldliness grieves him—their sinful indulgences grieve him—their light, frothy conversation grieves him—their inattention to his 'still small voice,' and their forgetfulness of all his kindnesses grieves him,—and suspending, but not wholly withdrawing, his gracious influence, their souls become like Mount Gilboa, upon which no dew rested. But there is a remedy. Seek that Spirit whom you have driven from your presence; implore his return, beseech him for Jesus' sake to revisit you, to breathe his reviving influence as of old upon your soul, "that the spices thereof may flow out," and that your

“beloved may come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.” Then will return the happy days of former years, the sweet seasons of your early history, and you shall “sing as in the days of your youth, and as in the day when you came up out of the land of Egypt.”

“Return, O holy Dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest;
I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from my breast.”

Distance from the cross has contributed greatly to your present state of spiritual relapse. Retiring from beneath its shelter and its shade, you have left the region of safety, light, and peace, and, wandering over the mountains of sin, worldliness, and unbelief, have lost yourself amidst their darkness, solitude, and gloom. Finding in your backslidings no ‘green pastures,’ nor refreshing spring, nor shadowing rock, nor sweet repose, you have been almost ready to lie down, weary, faint, and bewildered. Turning away from the cross of Jesus, you have lost the view you once had of a sin-pardoning, reconciled Father; and judging of him now by his providences and not by his promises, and contem-

plating him through the gloomy medium of a conscience unsprinkled with the blood of Christ, you are disposed to impeach the wisdom, the faithfulness, and the love, of all his conduct towards you. But listen to the remedy. Yield yourself afresh to the attractions of the cross. Return, return to it again. No burning Cherubim nor flaming sword guards its avenue. The atoning blood, there shed, has opened the way of the sinner's approach, and the interceding High Priest in heaven keeps it open for every repentant prodigal. Return to the true cross. Come and sit down beneath its grateful shade. Poor, weary wanderer! there is life and power, peace and repose, for you still in the cross of Christ. Mercy speaks from it, God smiles in it, Jesus stands by it, and the Holy Spirit, hovering above it, is prepared to reveal it to you afresh, in all its healing, restoring power.

And is it thus that 'strangers' have devoured your strength, and that 'gray hairs are here and there' upon you? Despair not of a better state. How powerful and persuasive the motives to your return to God which we have arrayed before you! The Father holding out his hand—Jesus alluring you—the Holy Spirit bending

over you—and your vacant seat at the gospel-feast, so long deserted, still inviting your return. Say not, O wandering child, O mourning penitent, “My way is hid from the Lord.” No! His eye has been upon thee in all thy waywardness and wanderings; and now, in the tender character and with the quenchless, deathless love of a Father, he is on the watch for your return. Will he upbraid that loss of spiritual strength? will he despise those thin, gray hairs? O no! “He giveth power to the faint: and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.”

CHAPTER III.

THE INNER LIFE CONTRASTED WITH ITS COUNTERFEIT.

“THESE ARE WELLS WITHOUT WATER.”—2 PETER ii. 7.

It is one of the ever-working schemes and master strokes of the prince of darkness—and too successful is his exploit—to annihilate in the view of man the essential difference which God's holy word draws between the mere external profession of Christianity, and its internal and vital possession. And yet, while we concede that in every true disciple of Jesus these two extremes meet—the possession and the profession of Christ—at the same time we must remark that, existing apart and alone, heaven and earth, midnight darkness and meridian light, life and death itself, are not more essentially distinct from each other than they. To break

down this broad, unbending line of separation, and thus to reduce the life-possessing and life-imparting religion of Jesus to a religion of mere sentiment, or of feeling, or of form,—in other words, to the religion of death,—is Satan's grand and too successful scheme. It would be, perhaps, difficult to say from which field he has reaped a more appalling harvest of souls—that of a nominal religious profession, or that of a profane and avowed ungodliness. We speak not lightly, but it is our solemn conviction, that more souls have gone down to the regions of despair reposing in their baptismal vows, and sacramental grace, and works of human righteousness, than those who made no profession of religion whatever, save the religion of the infidel, the atheist, or the world. It is to this large and solemn class the apostle applies the searching words selected as the basis of our present remarks—"These are wells without water." The passage suggests two distinct and important topics of consideration: the character of the true believer, or what the real Christian possesses; the character of the false Christian, or what the mere professor does not possess.

The figure of the text is not only one of fre-

quent occurrence in the word of God, but in its best interpretation it is highly expressive of the gracious character, and holy, dispensing influence of the true believer in the Lord Jesus. Reverse the awfully significant meaning in which it is used by the apostle, and you have the exact portrait of a truly Christian man. The well *without* water, supposes the existence of the well *with* water. And as the well without water is descriptive of the false Christian, so the well with water is descriptive of the true—and it is of him we are first to speak.

The real believer in Jesus is a gracious man. He is a ‘living soul.’ He is the partaker of a new and a Divine nature, and is the depository of a heavenly and a precious treasure. In exhibiting him under the figure of the well *with* water, we are naturally led to trace *the source of his supply*. The well may contain, but it does not originate the supply. It holds the water, but it cannot create the water. It is dependent upon a foreign and a hidden source. From a depth which no line can fathom, and which no skill can explore, the precious fluid rushes forth, sparkling and bounding in the joyousness of its own independent and myste-

rious existence. It is thus with Christianity and the Christian. There is not a well of salvation in the gospel, nor a spring of life in the believer, which is not dependent for its supply upon a source extraneous from itself. The Lord Jesus Christ is that Source. He is the well-head of all salvation and of all grace. The well with water is the well that has its source in him — “of whose fulness all we have received, and grace for grace.” God, the ‘Fountain of life,’ light, and grace, has ordained that the Lord Jesus Christ, his own beloved Son, should be the well-spring, the one source of supply from whence all the salvation of the sinner, all the sanctity of the saint, and all the grace and truth of the Church, collectively and individually, should be derived. “It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.” What a glorious declaration is this! How should our hearts leap for joy, and our souls thrill with gladness at its very sound! All the “fulness of the Godhead bodily;” all the fulness of the Church graciously; all the fulness of the sinner savingly; all the fulness of the Christian sanctifyingly;—in a word, all that a poor, fallen, tried son of Adam wants,

until he reaches heaven itself, whence this fulness has come,—is, by God's eternal love and wisdom, treasured up in the "Second Adam, the Lord from heaven." From him the well derives its water. In the description which we have of the creation of the world, there is a distinction observed between the "waters which were under the firmament and the waters which were above the firmament," Gen. i. 7. In the new creation not less striking and observable is this difference. The water above, is the "pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God," and gathered together in one mighty confluence in Jesus; and by him brought down to earth and deposited in all true believers, who thus become wells *with* water; and so, by the dispensing influence of their grace and holiness, "water the whole face of the ground." Thus the "waters are divided from the waters"—the water in the Fountain above, from the water in the well below. But this truth will be unfolded more fully in the consideration of—

The well itself. The Christian, figuratively speaking, is this well, deriving, as we have seen, his supply from that hidden Spring to whom he

is closely united. There is, first, the interesting fact upon which a preceding chapter has fully expatiated, and therefore to which we need but simply now refer—the in-being of Christ in the soul. Christ himself enunciates the truth: “I in them.” Observe, these are not the words of the apostle, whose ardent mind and glowing imagination might be supposed to exaggerate a truth beyond its proper limits; but they are words of Jesus himself—of him who is the Truth, and who therefore cannot lie. “I in them.” Christ dwelling in the soul forms the inner life of that soul. The experience of this blessing stands connected with the lowest degree of grace, and with the feeblest faith; the lamb of the flock, the soul that has but touched the hem of the Saviour’s garment, prostrate as a penitent at the feet of the true Aaron—in each and in all Christ alike dwells. He has a throne in that heart, a temple in that body, a dwelling in that soul, and thus, as by a kind of second incarnation, God is manifest in the flesh; in Christ’s manifestation in the believer. Truly is he a well *with* water, who has “Christ in him the hope of glory.”

In addition to this is, *the indwelling of God’s*

grace in the soul. Grace is a thing foreign to the natural state of man. His possession of it is not coeval with his birth, nor can it be his by right of hereditary law. No parent, however holy, can transmit a particle of that holiness to his posterity. The law of primogeniture, or the privilege of the birthright, is set aside in the kingdom of grace, whose subjects are “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” But see how this mystery is cleared up in the conversation which Jesus held with the Samaritan woman, as he sat wearied upon the mouth of Jacob’s well: “Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” This is the grace of which we speak, and this the source from whence it flows into the hearts of all the truly regenerate. It is in you, Christian reader, “a well of water,” a springing well, mounting upward and ascending to the source from whence it rises. God looks upon you, not as a dry well, but as a springing well—his own renewing, adopting, sanctifying grace, flowing into your heart—and

thus ascending to Him from whom it proceeds, in holy desires, and spiritual aspirations, and divine actings—the living water seeking its level, and rising to its source. Blessed words, —“ Springing up into everlasting life !” As the first blush of morning is a part of the day, so the least dawn of grace in the soul is a portion of heaven. The well below, is the spring of grace—the well above, is the fountain of glory. “ The one inchoate, the other consummate ; the one preparatory, the other satisfactory ; the former a prelibation, the latter a fruition.”

Yet a third blessing of the renewed state is *the indwelling of the Holy Spirit*. Thus says the apostle : “ Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ?” He would seem to say—“ If you do not know it, you ought to know it as one professing godliness.” O what a celestial well—though in himself a poor earthen vessel, a broken cistern—is that regenerate man who has the Holy Spirit reigning in him, living in him—never to abdicate his throne, never to forsake his sanctuary, never to vacate his dwelling, never, by all the corruptions that are there, by all the slightings, and piercings, and

woundings which he receives, forced to retire from the temple he has constructed, beautified, and made his own !

In view of these statements, who will, then, deny that all believers in Jesus are wells *with* water ? What an exalted character, and what an enviable man, is the true Christian ! All the resources of the Triune God unite to replenish this earthen vessel. No angel in heaven contains a treasure half so costly and so precious as that poor believing sinner, who, getting near to the Saviour's feet, and bathing them with tears of penitence and love, can look up and exclaim, " Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

But we must not overlook an interesting thought suggested by the figure of the text. I allude to the *dispersing influence* of the well. What is the proper design of a well ? Certainly it is not constructed for itself. It is designed to disperse abroad its fulness, and to communicate the blessing it contains. Unless the water of a well finds an outlet, it becomes of necessity stagnant and inert ; and instead of being a well giving out and spreading abroad

its sparkling streams, it is a still, lifeless reservoir, yielding nothing, and consequently receiving nothing. Striking emblem of the Christian! The knowledge and the grace that God has given you, though for yourself primarily, are not for yourself exclusively. God, in making you a well of living water—in other words, a possessor of Divine grace—designed to disperse abroad the streams; so that through the consistency of your walk, the holiness of your life, and the personal activity of your grace in the cause of God and of truth, it might find an outlet for the benefit of others.

What a well of spiritual *knowledge* is the true believer! To him it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, while from others they are hidden. Where may we look for an understanding of the revealed mind of God but to him? Who knows the secret of the Lord, and to whom does he show his covenant, but to those who fear him? Having ‘an unction from the Holy One,’ he knows all things. He knows something of that mystery, which no philosophy of man can teach him—the plague of his own heart. He knows something, too, of the value of Christ—his person, his work,

his glory, his fulness, his tenderness, his sympathy, his preciousness. He knows something of the character and dealings of God—as a holy God, as a sin-forgiving God, as a just God, and yet who blots out sin and remembers it no more for ever. He knows, in some measure, what the intricacies of the intricate way are; what the narrowness of the narrow path is; what are the difficulties of walking with God; what are the conflicts, the trials, the tribulations of the Christian life,—and the stream flows abroad. What a well of *holiness* is the true believer! The Spirit of holiness inhabiting him, despite the corrupt sediment of his fallen nature, he contains and dispenses abroad that stream of holy influence which carries with it a blessing wherever it flows. Where do we look for true holiness save in the soul born again of the Spirit? A holy man is earth's greatest blessing, is the world's richest ornament and shield. What a well of *compassion* is the real Christian! He it is who, taught the priceless value of his own eternal happiness, has bowels of compassion for the souls of others involved in like ruin with himself. “O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a

fountain of tears!" says Jeremiah. "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes because they keep not thy law!" exclaims David. These men were mourning wells—and God has distinguished such. "Set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done," Ezek. ix. 4. The Lord Jesus, the great mourner, who wept, not for himself, but for others, has his bottle for the tears of these wells of pity and compassion; whose sympathies, and prayers, and exertions, flow forth for the conversion of sinners, for the salvation of souls. Wells of *charity*, too, are they. Where shall we look for the Divine cement, the true bond, which unites the heart of man to man, but in the one Church of God? Who is the true peace-maker, the diligent sower of peace, the zealous promoter of love, charity, and good-will amongst men, but he in whose heart the love of God finds a home? Who has such sincere pity for the poor, whose hand is more ready to relieve their necessities—than he who himself is a conscious partaker of the benevolence of God? Such, reader, are some of the characteristics of true Christians—the wells *with* water—dispensing wells.

There is yet another essential feature of a gracious state suggested by the figure, which we must not overlook. These wells with water are perpetually *receiving* as well as dispensing. Indeed, they can only communicate to others what is communicated to them. We have intimated that believers are *but* wells. All their springs are in God. Listen to the acknowledgment: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God! My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. O God, thou art my God! early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is." And then comes the Divine answer: "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water," Isa. xli. 17, 18. And then follows the response of the soul thirsting after righteousness: "Lord, give me this water, that I thirst not." Thus does the

gracious soul derive all its grace from Christ, "who of God is made unto him wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." He stands by to replenish the well as its resources are exhausted. When the water is low, he raises it; as it gives out, he pours in; and the more liberally it imparts, the more bountifully it receives. "The liberal soul deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand." "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth." Who has ever become poor for God? Who has given freely that has not in return received freely? Who has ever laid himself out for the Lord, consecrating his substance, his influence, his time, his talents, that has not experienced a welling up in his own soul of the hidden spring, more than replacing all that he has dispensed? The grace that has been employed, the faith that has been exercised, the wealth that has been consecrated, the influence that has been exerted, the reproach that has been endured, the suffering that has been experienced, the health that has been expended, the loss that has been sustained for Christ, Christ has more than recompensed even in the present time-state.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness”—is the precept—“and all these things shall be added unto you”—is the promise; and He who enjoins the precept, will make good the promise.

Such, then, are some of the characteristics of true Christians. The reverse of all this we now proceed to consider, in an analysis of the character of the false Christian—the graceless professor—the self-deceived. “These are wells *without* water.”

Let it be distinctly observed that they are spoken of as *wells*; that is, they are professors of religion. They have the “form of godliness.” They have all the external appearance of real grace and sanctity. Judging of them by their church, or by their minister, or by their creed, or by their party zeal, or even by their knowledge, we should at once rank them, and perhaps rank them high, with the *true* possessors of grace. So strong are some of the features of resemblance, that it needs the most skilful eye to detect the difference. Looking, not at the external construction of the well—the beautiful and costly materials of which it is composed—but looking *within* the well, we

soon discover that it is a well *without water*. Again we remark, that, forming our judgment of them by their church membership, their correct orthodoxy, their showy Christianity, many would be deceived as to their real state, beguiled into the belief that they were truly converted. But when judged of by God's word—alas, how awful the lack! Thus far may you go, professors of religion, and yet rest short of the reality. You may be baptized, may partake of the Lord's Supper, may be enrolled upon the records of the Church, be thought a Christian, be respected as a Christian, be confided in as a Christian, and yet His searching glance 'whose eyes are as a flame of fire,' discovers in you nothing but a *well without water*, a soul without grace,—religious profession without religious principle.

Thus have we shown that a godless professor, a false Christian, is but a dry well. There is no inhabitation of the Spirit, no indwelling of Christ, no possession of Divine grace. No tears of repentance have ever moistened the eyes. There are no wellings up from the heart of holy aspirations after God, of loving desires after Jesus. There are no indications of the

plague known, of the burden felt, or of the conflict experienced. No echoing of the apostle's language—"Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" There are no breathings after holiness, no longings after Divine conformity, no desires to depart and be with Christ, no anointing of the Spirit. With all the light that is in his judgment, and his observance of days, and months, and seasons, he is but a dry well—a *well without water*. He possesses not the inner life.

Contemplate this affecting character in yet another point of light—the influence which a mere religious professor exerts. A well without water!—what a miserable privation! The weary traveller after much endurance of thirst and suffering descries in the distance the inviting well. Rejoicing in the discovery, he quickens his pace, and lo! he finds it indeed a well, but a dry well—a *well without water*! His expectation is turned into disappointment, his joy into sorrow; and like the Saviour who came hungry to the fig-tree and found upon it no fruit, and retiring, breathed upon it his withering curse, so departs the traveller from the well which has so cruelly mocked his raging

thirst. Thus is it with a mere professor—an empty, graceless professor of religion. We go to him, hoping for a little lift in our journey homeward; we go, seeking for some sweet consolation in our deep trial, for counsel in our perplexity, for sympathy with our sorrow, for the communion of saints,—but alas! there is no response, no echo, no vibrating chord—nothing in union with what we feel: the well is dry, and not one drop can we extract from it. Oh, is it not one of the bitterest reflections that can fasten upon your mind, that, perhaps, many a poor thirsty soul has repaired to you for instruction, for sympathy, for strength, and finding you a stranger to the mysteries of the Divine life, to the trials, the conflicts, and the joys of the Christian, has turned away in bitter disappointment, even as the soul, parched with thirst, turns from the well without water. It is a solemn thing to be mistaken for a real believer, to be looked up to as a true Christian, and yet to prove destitute of the knowledge and grace of Christ!—to awaken hope, and to raise expectation, and to create an interest, and to inspire confidence, and when the test is made, when the trial comes, to prove but a

graceless soul—*deceived and deceiving!* And yet what numbers there are of such! We speak of Jesus—there is no echo. We introduce the subject—of all subjects the most interesting and momentous—the subject of religion—there is no response. We go into the detail of Christian experience, the warfare, the sorrows, the joys, the trials, the burdens, the progress, the hope of the Christian, but we speak a language that they understand not. “These are wells without water.” No ingenuity can elicit, no possible effort can extract, one drop of the living water. “We pipe unto them, but they do not dance; we mourn to them, but they do not weep.”

Turning now to the true Christian, in view of this affecting character we have been attempting to portray, let me remark upon the deep humility which ought to distinguish him as a real professor of the grace of Christ Jesus. What are you in yourself but the mere well?—the grace which you possess is a communicated grace. We have this precious treasure in earthen vessels. All that is really holy and gracious in us, springs not from our fallen nature, but, like “every good and perfect gift,

cometh down from the Father of Lights." It is the spontaneous outflowing of the heart of God—the free, unmerited bestowment of his sovereign mercy. Then what meekness of heart, what profound humility of mind, ought to mark you! What a prostration of every form of self—self-confidence, self-seeking, self-boasting, that overweening view of our attainments and doings, which mars the Christianity of so many—should there be, as reasonably becometh those who have nothing but what they have received, and whom free and sovereign grace alone has distinguished from others!

How precious ought Jesus to be to us, who has condescended to pour this heavenly treasure into our hearts, and to undertake its constant supply! In what way can we best prove our sense of his goodness, but by drawing largely from the Fountain, and by glorifying him in what we receive? Truly "the well is deep" from whence we draw this living water! Our resources are inexhaustible, because they are infinite. Nor can we come too frequently, nor draw too largely. "Spring up, O well of grace and love, into our hearts! Let not our waters be shallow nor sluggish. O for more

depth of indwelling grace ! O for more fervour of holy love ! O for richer supplies from the fulness of Christ ! O for a gracious revival in our souls ! ‘Come down,’ blessed Jesus, ‘as rain upon the mown grass !’ Breathe, O south wind of the Spirit, upon the garden of our souls, that the spices may flow out ! Truly the well is deep, from whence we have this living water ; but faith can reach it, and in proportion to the strength of our faith, and the directness and simplicity with which it deals with Christ, will be the plenitude of our supply. “Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved,” is our Lord’s gracious invitation to his Church.

Nor let us fail to learn the secret of receiving much from Christ,—even the free dispensing abroad of what we have already received. Be assured of this, that he will receive the most from God who does the most for God : “The diligent soul shall be made fat. He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand : but the hand of the diligent maketh rich. There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth.” This is God’s law, and he will never repeal it ; his promise, and he will ever, and in all cases, make it good. Go forth, believer in Christ, and let

your beams of light irradiate ; let your streams of grace be dispersed abroad ; live for God, suffer for Christ, witness for the truth, and labour for man. Be you such a depositary of this living and life-giving treasure, that others, less favoured than yourself, instructed, guided, and strengthened by your wisdom, experience, and grace, may proceed on their way, glorifying God for the grace given to you. O to have the word of God dwelling in us so richly, and our hearts so intensely glowing with the love of Christ, as to be ever ready to open our lips for God—a well always full, and running over.

This, then, is the secret of augmenting our stores, even by scattering them,—of replenishing our resources, even by exhausting them. Who, we repeat the question, has ever become impoverished by giving and labouring for God ? Where lives the Christian steward whose fidelity to his Master's interests has compromised the welfare of his own ? Where is the Christian man who, with cheerful munificence, has consecrated his intellectual wealth or his temporal wealth to advance the truth and kingdom of Jesus, whom Christ has not reimbursed a thousand fold ? Where is the believer in Jesus who has en-

dured reproach and suffering, patiently and silently, for conscience' sake, for truth's sake, for Christ's sake, who has not infinitely gained in the rest which he has found in God ? Where is the active Christian, who, zealously labouring to dispense abroad the life-giving waters, has not felt, in the solemn retirement and calm repose of his closet, when pouring out his sorrow into the bosom of his Saviour, or in holding close and holy communion with his God, the springing up into his soul of a hidden well of peace, and joy, and love, which has more than restored the energies he has exhausted, and recompensed him for the sacrifice which he has made ? God meets his people in all their works of faith and labours of love. They are never alone. He meets them in the path of duty and of trial—both in doing and in suffering his will. He meets them, when embarrassed,—with counsel; he meets them, when assailed, with protection; he meets them, when exhausted, with strength; he meets them, when faint, with cordials. If we take up Christ's cross upon our shoulder, Christ will take both us and our cross up in his arms. If we bow down our neck to his yoke and bend low our back to his

burden, we shall find our rest in both. "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways."

"How may I know that I am a well with water?" may be the anxious inquiry of many as they come to the conclusion of this subject. "O that I were *quite sure* that I was more than a mere professor!" But why ask the question? why be in doubt? Never was so momentous a matter more easily and speedily settled. "He that believeth in the Son of God hath the witness in himself." Thus, from yourself you need not travel in order to ascertain your true spiritual condition. No one can be a substitute in this great matter for yourself. It is a thing which has too close and personal a relation to you as an individual, to admit of a transfer of its obligations to another. You must feel for yourself,—you must experience for yourself,—you must have the witness for yourself—and you must decide for yourself alone. I repeat the solemn words—"He that believeth in the Son of God, hath the witness *in himself*." And again says the same apostle, "Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he rejoice *in himself* alone, and not in another,"

Gal. vi. 4. Thus may you come to a right and safe decision in a question involving interests as solemn and as deathless as eternity. Seek this inward witness. Witnessing to what?—that your heart has been convinced of sin—that you have renounced your own righteousness—that you have fled to the Lord Jesus Christ—and that your soul is breathing after personal holiness. Do not, I beseech you, rest short of this. Here I must hold you. All your reasonings, and objections, and cavillings, and hair-splittings, and subtleties, and sophistries—I cannot away with them. They are but sparks of your own kindling, in the midst of which you will lie down and die, and die the horrors of the second death, if you are not broad awake to your real condition before God. Give them all up, I implore you. Be not concerned about others; let your first and chief concern be about *yourself*. You have no time, just now, to analyse the motives, or sift the principles, or search into the character, or mark the foibles, and detect the inconsistencies of Christian professors: every moment to you is more priceless and precious than all the gems of India; yea, one second of time saved, is of more value to you

than a whole eternity lost! Once you shoot across the dark gulph and land on the other side without the inner life,—you may *then* trifle with your existence, and sport with your soul, and laugh at death and hell, and recriminate and reproach others, and brave your doubts, and invent your objections, and frame your excuses, and speculate, and refine, and analyse in theology, and play the fool, as you like,—for “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for (an eternal anticipation) of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.” But you cannot afford to act so *now*. Your precious soul is in danger, your future happiness is in peril, you are in the hands of an angry God, and you are, in fact, fast coming to the close of your probation. To act the fool and to assume the lunatic now, would be more than a mere semblance of the melancholy and awful reality. O come, then, to Christ,—I bid you, invite you, implore you to come to Christ. He will answer all your questions, resolve all your doubts, remove all your difficulties, meet all your objections, and quiet all your fears. *Only come to Christ.* To this one alternative, to

this last resort, I would shut you up. From this I cannot release you. You *must* come to Christ, or you are lost. He is all, and he has all, and he will freely give you all that you want. One drop of his blood falling upon your conscience, one beam of his love darting in upon your soul, one stream of his grace flowing into your heart, will make all right within; and the morning, when the sun rises in splendour, will not look more radiant, and the lark when it mounts heavenward bathed in its beams, will not sing more sweetly, than you—when Jesus thus enters your soul, filling it with sunshine and music. Accept the invitation—“Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out”—and you are saved.

“Just as I am—without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd’st me come to thee—
O Lamb of God, I come!

“Just as I am—and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,—
To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come!

“Just as I am—though toss’d about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
With fears within and wars without—
O Lamb of God I come!

“Just as I am—poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need, in thee to find—
O Lamb of God, I come!

“Just as I am—thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because thy promise I believe—
O Lamb of God, I come!

“Just as I am—thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now, to be thine, yea, thine alone—
O Lamb of God, I come!”

We may anticipate another anxious enquiry. “What course am I to adopt when the water is low, when the well is dry, when no effort avails to bring the living fluid to the surface?—in other words, when I find a spiritual drought and deadness in my soul, and cannot feel, nor weep, nor sigh, nor desire?—when to read and meditate, to hear and pray, seem an irksome task?—when I cannot see the Saviour’s beauty, nor feel him precious, nor labour as zealously, nor suffer as patiently for him as I would?” The answer is at hand—*Look again to Jesus*. This is the only remedy that can meet your case. Search the Bible through, inquire of all the ministers who have ever lived, and

still the answer would be—LOOK AGAIN TO JESUS. Go direct to Christ—he is the Fountain-head, he is the living Well. True, the well is deep—for its fulness is *infinite*—but faith, be it of the smallest capacity, can with joy draw sufficient to quench your thirst, and make your soul as a garden which the streams have refreshed and made to “rejoice and blossom as the rose.” The Infinite and Eternal Well is near to you. Like Hagar you are within its reach. May the Holy Spirit open your eyes to see that while all emptiness exists in you, all fulness dwells in Jesus,—that, however low may be the living waters in the well of your heart, there is a fathomless depth in the heart of Christ—of love unchangeable, of grace all-sufficient, of truth immutable, of salvation from all sin and trial and sorrow, commensurate with your need, and vast as his own infinity. Never can your grace be too low, nor your frame too depressed, nor your path too perplexing, nor your sorrow too keen, nor your sin too great, nor your condition too extreme for Christ,—because he is both Divine and human: thus uniting the nature that can relieve, with the nature that can sympathise. “Son of God!

Son of man ! how wondrous and glorious art Thou !” Weeping in lonely sorrow, and pining in sickening want, you may, like the banished wife of Abraham, be looking wistfully around you for succour and relief. See ! that relief and succour are near ! rise,—that relief is at hand ! Christ is with you, Christ is near you, Christ is in you a Fountain of living water. Cease your sadness, dry your tears,—rise ! and “with joy draw water out of this Well of salvation.”

Be very honest and diligent in ascertaining *the cause* of your soul’s dryness. The correct knowledge of this is necessary to its removal ; and its removal is essential to the effectual recovery of the inner life from its sad relapse. Is it indulged sin ?—is it the neglect of private prayer ?—is it the forsaking of the means of grace ?—is it worldliness, carnality, unwatchfulness ? Any one of these would so grieve the Spirit of God within you, as to dry up the spirituality of your soul. Be not beguiled with the belief that the real recovery has taken place, simply because that, conscious of your state, in common-place, meanless regrets, you acknowledge and deplore it. “The sluggard desireth, and hath nothing.” Ob-

serve, he has his *desires*, but nothing more, because with them he is satisfied. There is no effectual rousing from his sleep, no earnest attempts are made to shake off the spirit of slumber, no resolute putting away of the narcotic which produced and which protracts it. There is no drawing near to God, no looking to Christ, no seeking of the Spirit, no thorough mortification of sin, no coming out of the world, no pressing forward. It is the mere desire of the sluggard, and nothing more. Let not this be your state. Receive with gladness any awakening to a consciousness of your spiritual relapse, and cherish with prayer any real desire for a better state; but do not rest here. Seek earnestly, importunately, believingly, until you possess more abundantly life from Christ. Seek a gracious revival of the inner life—the life of God in your soul. Seek a clearer manifestation of Christ, a renewed baptism of the Spirit, a more undoubted evidence of your conversion, a surer, brighter hope of heaven. Thus seeking, you will find it; and finding it, your “peace will flow like a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.” O the joy of a revived state of the inner life of God! It is the joy of

spring succeeding to the gloom and chill of winter. It is the joy of the sunlight after a cloudy and dark day. Jesus, walking in the midst of the grace which his own Spirit has thus revived, gently addresses the soul: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

Give all diligence in the use of the means of grace, if you desire a flourishing state of soul. They are the Divinely appointed channels of conveyance from the Fountain. They are the tributary streams from the Great Ocean. You cannot possibly maintain a healthy, vigorous state of the inner life, without them. You cannot neglect, with impunity, private prayer, meditation, and self-examination; or public ordinances—the ministry of the Word, the services of the sanctuary, the assemblies of the saints. A slight thrown upon these must entail a severe loss to your soul. Some professors can go

from Sabbath to Sabbath, plunged in worldliness, or eager in the pursuit of gain, in total neglect of the social prayer-meeting, or of the weekly lecture—those needed rests and hallowed pauses in the way—as if there were no such appointments. These are among the things which weaken the hands, and discourage the heart, and hinder the usefulness of the faithful pastor. But a more painful calamity even than this, is the dryness, deadness, and barrenness which this neglect brings into their own souls. It would seem as if this were the punishment of their sin. They turn their backs upon God, and God turns his back upon them. They neglect to make the pool, and he withholds the rain that fills it. But, Christian professor, this must not be! The wells must be digged, the water must be searched for. We are told that “Isaac’s servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water”—or, as the margin renders it—“a well of living water.” And he is pronounced a blessed man “who, passing through the valley of Baca, makes it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.” It is in this way of diligent, prayerful waiting upon the means, that “he goes from strength to strength,

until he appears before God." O, dig for this precious water! Search, O search, for this living grace! Make the pool, and trust the faithfulness and lovingkindness of God to fill it with "the early and the latter rain." No man shall wait upon the Lord in vain. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." They who plough deeply the fallow ground, and in its furrows sow the precious seed, shall not lack the Holy Spirit's descending influence, in silent dew by night, and in copious showers by day, to quicken and to fructify it. Only honour the God of grace in all the means of grace, and God will honour you by imparting to you all grace through the means. "The diligent soul shall be made fat." Return, O return to the forsaken Christ, to the neglected sanctuary, to the despised means, and you shall then no longer have reason to exclaim, "My leanness! my leanness!"

What a truly appalling character it has been the endeavour of these pages to portray—an empty, graceless professor of Christ! Reader, is this your state? Examine yourself, prove your own self, and ascertain truly if you have "Christ in you the hope of glory." Satisfy not

yourself with external ceremonies, with the observance of days, of matins, and vespers, and frequent communions—with almsgiving and charities. Are you a well *with* water? This, *this* is the great and momentous question which, in the near prospect of death, and of the judgment that follows death, it behoves you to decide. Is Christ dwelling in your heart by his Spirit? Is your religion more than a mere outward profession? O, it is an awful thing to go into eternity with your Bible, and your Psalm-book, or your Prayer-book in your hand, but without Christ living in your soul; with the elements of the Saviour's love melting upon your lips, but without the experience of the Saviour's love glowing in your heart; to go reposing in false dependence upon Church privileges, and to have come short of the only true foundation upon which the sinner can build his hope of heaven,—the sliding sand substituted for the Eternal Rock. How exactly has the Lord Jesus met such a case! In one of his striking parabolical discourses, he has furnished us with a description of certain persons who in the day of judgment will be found to have put in the plea of Church union, and Church ordi-

nances, and Church privileges, as justifying their claim to admission into heaven ; but who will be rejected on that very ground, to their shame and everlasting contempt. Listen to his description : “ When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us ; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are. Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are : depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.” Luke xiii. 25—27. And who, my reader, are these ? Be not deceived ! They are not the profane, and the profligate, and the neglecter of means, and the despiser of ordinances : far otherwise. They are professors of religion, nominal Christians—“ almost Christians ;” individuals who had been baptized, who frequented the house of God, who were regular in their attendance upon ordinances, and who believed that, by their zealous labours, and their amiable qualities, and their charities and good-will to men, they would at

last be saved. But, alas ! they are deceived. With all this outward profession, they were unregenerated by the Spirit, were uncircumcised in heart, were unjustified by Christ, and had never given themselves up “a habitation of God through the Spirit.” Baptism could not regenerate them, the Lord’s Supper could not sanctify them, their own works could not justify them ; and when with confidence they went up to the very gate of heaven, and knocked for admission, lo ! they were met with the stern rebuke, “I know you not whence ye are : depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.” O beware, we beseech you, of those public teachers who tell you that you were regenerated in baptism, and that the Lord’s Supper is the instrument of maintaining you in that state of salvation into which, as they teach, baptism introduced you. Give not place to such false instructors, such blind guides, such perverters of the truth, such soul-destroyers ; no, not for one moment. Let not their eloquence entice you, let not their reasoning ensnare you, let not their show of sanctity beguile you. You have interests at stake too dear and precious to peril on such terms as these.

I leave these solemn, searching considerations to your prayerful reflection, passing on to another figurative representation of the Inner Life,—in its relapse and recovery.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INNER LIFE IN ITS RELAPSED INFLUENCE.

THE UNSAVOURY SALT.

“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.” MATT. v. 13.

THE more deeply the subject now engaging our attention—the spiritual life, its decay and recovery—unfolds itself to the mind, the more irresistible and overwhelming must be the conviction of its measureless importance and solemnity. All other considerations, in comparison, having their relation to the present, however important, interesting, and absorbing for the moment, dwindle into impressive insignificance. The personal interests of an individual must, to that individual, be of greater moment and more precious than all other

interests. It is a law of nature that we should love ourselves ; and it is the law of revelation that we should love our neighbour as ourselves ; thus, the word of God, while recognising the law of self-love, divests it at the same time of its selfishness. Nowhere does this law find such proper and ample scope for its exercise, and in nothing is it more affectingly and strongly appealed to, than in the matter of *personal salvation*. “For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and *lose himself*, or be cast away?” The law of self-preservation, the law of his being, is here addressed in its most solemn relation,—its relation to eternity. To this eternity we are hastening. We are passing from shadows to realities—from things that are seen and temporal, to things that are unseen and eternal. The inevitable and awful crisis is near, when all that now awakens so much interest, and creates so much excitement, and absorbs so much time, will be as the arrow winged through the air—leaving no impression and no trace. One moment’s personal, actual contact with eternity, one drop of the cold moisture of death trembling upon the brow, one dim glimpse within the parting veil of the invisible world, will

dissipate the false, and invest with its true character everything that is real. We are as much convinced of the truth as we are conscious of the solemnity of the fact, that if the mind is not then beclouded, and the conscience is not then seared, and the heart is not then abandoned by God to the wedded idol, and the whole soul is not given over to judicial impenitence and unbelief—if indeed there be any moral sensibility, any the faintest apprehension of the awfulness of the position,—the one question of that tremendous moment will be—“Is my soul in a prepared state to meet God? Am I safe for eternity?”

And yet will it be considered discrepant with this statement to affirm of individuals in general, that men die much as they have lived? It would seem to be the cherished delusion of many, that a kind of moral transformation transpires in death; that because death itself is a change of relation, around which gather new sensations, new feelings, new thoughts, new solemnities, new prospects, that therefore the soul passes through a kind of spiritual preparedness to meet its approaching destiny. But such is not the case. The character which

time has for years been shaping, it yields to the demands of eternity in the precise mould in which it was formed. Death hands over the soul to the scrutiny and the decisions of the judgment exactly as life relinquished it. The 'king of terrors' has received no commission and possesses no power to effect a moral change in the transit of the spirit to the God who gave it. Its office is to unlock the cell, and conduct the prisoner into court. It can furnish no plea, it can suggest no argument, it can correct no error, it can whisper no hope, to the pale and trembling being on his way to the bar. The turnkey must present the criminal to the Judge, precisely as the officer delivered him to the turnkey—with all the marks and evidences of criminality and guilt clinging to him as at the moment of arrest. The supposition of multitudes seems to be, just what we have stated, that when the strange and mysterious, but unmistakeable signs of death, are stealing upon them—when the summons to appear before the Judge admits of not a doubt, and allows of no delay, that then what has been held as truth, and now, in the mighty illumination of an unveiling eternity, is found to be

error, may be with ease abandoned ; and that, however negligent they who have lived all their lifetime without God, may have been of religion, while the last day appeared distant,—and however careless they who had made a Christian profession, may have been of the ground of their confidence, and the reason of their hope, under an indefinite expectation of appearing in the presence of God,—yet now that the footfall of death is heard approaching, and the invisible world becomes visible through the opening chinks of the earthly house of their tabernacle, they will be enabled to summon all the remainder of strength, and with the utmost strenuousness turn their undivided attention to the business of saving the soul. But is it really so ? Is not the whole course of experience against a supposition so false as this ? Do not men die mostly as they have lived ? The infidel dies in infidelity, the profligate dies in profligacy, the atheist dies in atheism, the careless die in indifference, and the formalist dies in formality. There are exceptions to this, undoubtedly, but the exceptions confirm rather than disprove the general fact, that men die as they lived. “ He that is unjust, let him

be unjust still ; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still ; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still ; and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly ; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be."

In view, then, of this solemn statement,—deeply affecting it must be to the Christian professor,—we now turn to the great subject immediately before us. If it be thus that our death will derive much of its character and complexion from the present tenor of our life—that in proportion to the lack of spirituality and the undue influence which the world has had upon the mind—to the habitual distance of the walk with God, and the gradual separation from us of those holy, sanctifying influences which go to form the matured, influential, and useful Christian,—will be the lack of that bright evidence, and full assured hope in death, which will give to the departing soul an "abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom,"—then, of what great moment is it that every individual professing godliness, should know the exact state of his soul before God ! We have endeavoured to aid you in this ex-

amination by stating the nature of the inner spiritual life, by exhibiting some of the indications and evidences of a state of relapse, and then by portraying the character of the sincere and the false professor of religion. The decay of Christian *influence*, under the figure of the unsavoury salt, is a topic which seems naturally to follow. The words which suggest the state are taken from one of our Lord's graphic and awakening discourses, in which, with a skill he only was master of, he so dissects and individualises human character and responsibility, in their relations to the high and paramount claims of God and eternity, as to turn the eye of each believer within upon himself. Addressing professing Christians, he says, "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men." The world—the salt,—the unsavoury salt, are the topics which these words suggest.

Our first remark bears upon the world as constituting the particular sphere of the Christian's influence. "Ye are the salt *of the*

earth." We bestow but little observation, it is feared, upon the moral state of the world at large, and upon that portion in particular where our influence is the most concentrated and felt. It is true we admire its beauty, can paint its scenery, are absorbed in its history, are excited by its antiquities, and are astonished at its wonders,—but in its momentous relation to eternity, O how little interest does it awaken ! I am not about to descant upon the unsatisfying nature of the world, nor upon its passing away. Your own experience of what the world really is—of how much it promises and of how little it performs—will compile a better volume for your study than that which any human pen could compose. But I refer you to its deep, universal ungodliness. I speak of it as a world full of moral pollution, of anarchy, and of rebellion against God. A world crowded with all the present consequences of sin—poverty and suffering, disease and death. Who can read its statistics of crime, or glance at the journals which chronicle its daily history, and not feel the full force of the truth, that Satan is the supreme god of this world, and that "the whole world lies in wickedness"—literally,

‘in the wicked one.’ But how insensible are we of this! How faintly and imperfectly do we realise it! How little affected by the hatred—the bloodshed—the intemperance—the debauchery—the fraud—the grinding oppression—the gross injustice—the suffering—the misery—the death—which confront us at every step, and lift their wail of agony and cry of vengeance to heaven! How few of us sigh and cry for all these abominations that are done!

Nor yet of this alone, awful as it is. Equally insensible are we of the existence and progress of *error* in the world—truth-denying, God-dishonouring, Christ-supplanting, and soul-destroying error. We know and believe that no fallen child of Adam can be saved apart from the knowledge and experience of Divine and revealed truth—that the truth is the instrument of his renewal, and of his sanctification. Believing, then, that men are saved only by the truth, and are made holy only through the truth, how little concerned and alarmed are we by the fearful inroads of doctrinal errors, and popish practices, tending to mislead, and peril the best interests of the multitudes, to whose blind understanding and sin-loving

hearts the error that rocks the cradle of their soul's deep slumber, is ever more welcome than the truth that disturbs their carnal security, and arouses them from their false repose, by portraying their present sinfulness, and testifying of the "judgment to come."

Such is the world in which Christ has placed his Church as the sphere of its influence, as the theatre of its grace, and as the school of its graces. Such is the world of which all sincere believers in Jesus are declared by him to be, individually and collectively,—
"the salt of the earth."

We now proceed to illustrate and apply this interesting and important truth.

The metaphor, from its frequent use in the word of God, has come to be a holy and expressive one. In the sacrifices offered under the Levitical law, God commanded the use of salt: "And every oblation of thy meat-offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat-offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt," Lev. ii. 13. It was used in this relation as a

symbol of holy sincerity in their service, and as expressive of communion in their worship. We find, too, that God employs it as an emblem of his everlasting covenant: "All the heave-offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the Lord, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: it is a covenant of salt for ever before the Lord unto thee and to thy seed with thee," Numb. xviii. 19. When the prophet Elisha was desired to purify the waters of the corrupt fountain of Jericho, he cast salt into them, saying, "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed," 2 Kings ii. 21—22. But it is under the gospel dispensation we find the richest and most expressive meaning of the figure. When our Lord reminds his people that they are "the salt of the earth," he describes the gracious state of all real believers. The grace of God is that "salt," apart from which all is moral corruption and spiritual decay. Where Divine grace exists not, there is nothing to stunt the growth, or to check the

progress, or to restrain the power of the soul's depravity. The fountain pours out its streams of corruption and death, bidding defiance to all human efforts either to purify or restrain. Education cannot, public sentiment cannot, human law cannot, moral suasion cannot, self-love cannot; all these instruments fail in the attempt. There is going on in the soul a process of moral decay, which, if not averted by grace, must terminate in the insufferable and interminable pangs of the second death—the soul departing into eternity one mass of moral corruption. What a spectacle for the eye of a holy God to behold! With all his natural loveliness and amiable instincts—admired, lauded, caressed by man—the being is yet an object of the Divine loathing and abhorrence. If God loves himself, if he delights in his own holiness, he must hate sin, while yet enduring with all long-suffering the sinner, not willing that he should perish. But let one grain of the salt of God's grace fall into this corrupt fountain, and there is deposited a counteracting and transforming element, which at once commences a healing, purifying, and saving process. And, what parental restraint, and the long years of study, and human

law, had failed to do, one hour's deep repentance of sin, one believing glance at a crucified Saviour, one moment's realisation of the love of God, have effectually accomplished. O the intrinsic preciousness, the priceless value, the sovereign efficacy of this Divine salt—God's converting, sanctifying grace! Effecting a lodgement in the most debased and corrupt heart, it revolutionises the whole soul,—changing its principles, purifying its affections, ennobling its sentiments, and assimilating it to the Divine holiness. Be assured of this, my reader, that nothing short of the grace of God can renew and sanctify your nature, and fit you for the abodes of infinite holiness and bliss. You must become a subject of grace, ere you can become an heir of glory.

Thus all true believers in Jesus, from their gracious character, are denominated the “salt of the earth.” And why so? Because all that is Divine, and holy, and sanctifying, and precious, exists in them, and in them only. It is found in that nature which the Holy Ghost has renewed, in that heart which Divine grace has changed, in that soul humbled in the dust before God for sin, and now, in the exer-

cise of faith which he has given, reposing on the atoning work of Jesus, exclaiming,—

“ Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on thee.”

There, where God's love is felt—there, where the Holy Spirit is possessed—there, where the Saviour's atonement is received, and his image is reflected—there is found the precious “ salt of the earth.” The world does not know it, and even the lowly grace may be veiled from the eye of the church ;—few mark the silent tear, or see the deep prostration of the spirit before the Lord, or are cognizant of its hidden joy, or measure the extent of the holy influence, noiselessly, yet effectually exerted ; but God, looking from his throne of glory through the ranks of pure intelligences that encircle him, beholds it ; and in that humble mind, and in that believing heart, he sees the Divine and precious ‘ salt,’ which beautifies, sanctifies, and preserves the world. He sees true holiness nowhere else ; he recognises his own moral image in no other. The Christian is emphatically, “ the salt of the earth.”

But here a view of the subject presents itself of a deeply interesting character. We

allude to the moral influence of the Christian *as it is exerted*. This undoubtedly was the leading thought in the mind of our Lord when he employed the metaphor in its application to his people, "Ye are the salt of the earth." But in describing this influence, where shall I commence, and where shall I terminate? I can easier place my hand upon its commencement than upon its termination, because it never terminates! Christian influence begins with the first grain of grace, the first throb of life, the first beam of light, the first tear of godly sorrow, the first glance of faith—but its impressions and its results are as lasting as eternity. Solemn thought! The holy, gracious influence of a good man, stretches far away into the invisible world. But consider his *present* influence; his sphere, be it what it may, is just what God has made it,—but in that sphere, be it limited or boundless, he is God's salt, designed to preserve and to transform, by the holy influence which he exerts, the community in which he dwells. What a blessing is that Christian! Be the relation what it may which binds him to society—a husband, a wife, a parent, a child, a brother, a sister, a friend,—he is the salt of

the circle in which he moves. That little spark which glows in his bosom, may light the steps of some benighted wanderer to eternity; that measure of grace, diffusing its fragrance through his soul, may cheer and invigorate some tried and drooping spirit; that degree of spiritual knowledge which he possesses, may confirm some waverer, or guide some anxious and perplexed seeker after truth. The holy and commanding influence which God has given him, may, with its power, awe and subdue the mightiest agent of evil; or with its smile, cheer and encourage the weakest and lowliest effort of good. Blessed of God, he is a blessing to man. Of course it is understood that we are now speaking of the salt that has not lost its savour,—the savoury salt; we are describing the character and influence of a spiritually-minded Christian—of the influence exerted by one in whom the inner life is in a healthy, vigorous, active state. Such a believer is an incalculable blessing in any sphere in which he may move—he is truly “the salt of the earth:” there is a savouriness about him which betrays his inward grace: his example is savoury, his prayers are savoury, his conversation is savoury; we feel,

when we converse with him, that he has the Divine salt in his soul, that we are in the presence of a true Christian, that we are holding communion with one who is wont to hold communion with God, one who dwells near the cross, who lives beneath the anointing, who walks humbly with God, who lives as “ beholding Him who is invisible.” There is that in him which bespeaks the gracious man,—there is an echo to your voice, a response to your thought, a vibration to your touch, which rebounds upon your own soul with thrilling effect. You feel yourself, as it were, salted afresh by the salt that is in your brother; you have caught the contagion of his holiness,—his example has rebuked you, his zeal has quickened you, his love has melted you, his faith has invigorated you, his grace has refreshed you, his smile has gilded the dark cloud that perhaps hung around your spirit, his word has fallen balmy and healing upon your sorrowing, bleeding heart,—and the secret of all is, he is “ a sweet savour of Christ ” to your soul.

The same interpretation of the figure will equally apply to the church of God in its collective capacity. As the conservator of the

truth, what a blessing is the Church to the world—the only depository of this Divine and precious treasure—the sole living, practical exhibition of it upon earth—the only Divinely appointed and proper agent for its propagation throughout the world ! How solemn and responsible her position, how commanding and far-reaching her influence ! The counteracting agent of *error* is, undoubtedly, its opposite—TRUTH. And who possesses the truth, and who experiences the truth, and who loves the truth, and who guards and disseminates the truth, save the “ Church of God, the pillar and ground of the truth ? ” And what a preservative of the world has been the truth of God, thus defended and diffused by the influence of the Christian Church ! What but the truth, as held and maintained by the different sections of the Church of Christ, has arrested those fearful errors, the inroads of which have already worked such disasters in the world, and the unchecked progress of which must have proved its total destruction ? Systems rose, flourished, and fell ; schools existed, influenced, and died. Infidelity, popery, semi-popery, anti-christian, Christ-denying errors, have in their turns, and in different ages, had their

day; but the truth, for whose overthrow and destruction they all leagued, confederated, combined, and laboured, still lives, and lives to bless and save its enemies. When false doctrine has come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord has lifted up the standard of the gospel, and rolled it back. The pulpit and the press—those powerful agents in the hands of the Church of God—have scattered broad-cast the salt of truth, and those precious grains have counteracted the influence and stayed the progress of schisms and of errors. What but the salt of truth cast into the fountain of public opinion, by the labours of the Christian Church, has on many occasions so purified and changed its character, that on great questions deeply involving the welfare of individuals, of communities, and of nations—it has sent abroad an influence so healthy, vigorous, and commanding, as to effect a complete revolution in the decisions of cabinets and in the histories of states?

But we proceed to speak of the decay of the inner life, as manifest in the impaired vigour of Christian influence, figuratively set forth by the “salt that hath lost its savour,” and its conse-

buent unprofitableness. The indestructibility of the divine life in the soul of man, the imperishable nature of real grace, is a truth so deeply involving the holiness and happiness of the Christian,—and what is of still greater moment,—the glory of God, that we would place it in the foreground of the statement we are about to advance. In the most searching investigation we would make into the state of religion in the soul, we would never forget that where there exists real grace, that grace is as imperishable as the God who implanted it; that where true faith has led your trembling footsteps to Jesus, to receive him as all your salvation, that faith is as deathless as its Author.

But with this broad and emphatic statement of a great and holy truth, we must proceed to justify the affecting declaration of the Saviour's words, that the salt may lose its savour. In what sense will this apply to the inner, spiritual life of the believer? Most clearly and indisputably in the sense of a relapsed state of grace, and of its consequent loss of vigorous influence. The first symptom of this state which appears, may be a change which the individual detects in his own soul as to his actual,

personal enjoyment of religion. Propose to him the question,—With all your observance of external religious duties and activities, what amount of spiritual enjoyment have you of vital religion in your soul? In other words,—What real power does the spiritual life within you possess? Have you a heartfelt realization of the actuality and heavenliness of the divine things embodied in your creed, and avowed in your Christian profession? Have spiritual truths that holy savour and sweetness to your taste which indicate a healthy state of soul? Do you know habitually what close, filial, and confidential communion with God is?—the purifying power of confession?—the frequent sprinkling of the atoning blood?—the meek, submissive temper of mind in trials sent by God, or under provocation received from man? Were he to reply to these close, searching interrogatories, as a man honest with himself and to his God, he would perhaps unhesitatingly answer,—“Alas! the salt hath lost its savour! There was a period when all this was the happy experience of my soul. There was then a savour in the very name of Jesus—but it is gone! There was a reality in divine

truth—but it is gone! There was an attraction in the throne of grace—but it is gone! There was a bright ascending flame upon the altar of my heart, of love to Jesus, of communion with God—but it is gone! I once walked filially with my heavenly Father; I felt the power of godliness in my soul; I knew what heart-religion was, what secret, closet religion was—but alas! the salt hath lost its savour.”

Trace another symptom of this unsavoury religion in the deterioration through which his graces have passed. His love has lost its fervour, his faith its vigour, his zeal its fire, his spirit its lowliness, his carriage and deportment its gentleness and simplicity. There seems not a grace of the Holy Spirit in his soul to have escaped the blighting influence which has swept over him—not one that hath not lost something of its heavenly savour.

The feeble, if not the injurious influence which his religion exerts upon others is not the least marked and affecting evidence of the decay of spiritual life in his soul. His Christianity is of so sickly and doubtful a character, it produces no favourable impression. The world,—Argus-

eyed, keen to discern the mote in the eye, and ever ready to detect the slightest discrepancy of principle and practice,—knows him to be a professor of religion, and that is all of his Christianity that it does know. It is aware that he has passed through the solemn ordeal of a Christian profession, that he is enrolled amongst the saints, and mingles in their hallowed services ; but such are the glaring inconsistencies of his Christian walk, such is his worldliness, his lust of power, his thirst for wealth, his love of pleasure, the lightness of his spirit, his religion has become a proverb and a by-word amongst the immoral and profane, and produces no more winning, sanctifying effect upon others than the salt that has lost its savour. What is the church holier for his union with her ? What is the world better for his religion ? What moral darkness does he illumine ? What evil does he correct ? What misery does he alleviate ? What raging vice does he check ? What healthy impetus in the career of social progress does his Christian profession give to society ? Alas ! in all these things he is but as the salt that has lost its savour. Melancholy spectacle !—to witness a professing man,

who seemed for a time to run well, and whose Christian example was powerful and commanding, now faltering and pausing in his course, waning and deteriorating in his influence, his religion becoming tasteless and insipid. Yet such is the individual whose affecting character is portrayed by the expressive figure of the Saviour.

But a solemn question is proposed,—“Where-with shall it be salted?” In other words, how can such a relapsed state of the spiritual life be recovered? The question of the Saviour would seem to imply an utter impossibility in the thing; and we admit that at first sight it would so appear. The case is indeed a trying and a desperate one. Spiritual relapse is easy; but spiritual recovery is difficult. It is easier, we all know, to imbibe a disease than to counteract and arrest it—to plunge into difficulties than to escape from them. It is thus with the concerns of the soul. A case of conversion would seem to demand less power than a case of re-conversion,—to enkindle love in a rebel’s heart, than to re-kindle it in the heart of a child,—to bring a poor sinner to ground his arms, and prostrate himself a penitent sup-

pliant before the cross, than to reclaim a wanderer to the feet of the Saviour he had forsaken. Truths, motives, arguments, pleas, once so effective, have now lost their attraction and their power; and pride, shame, and hardness of heart, seem to have gained the ascendancy. The ashes of extinguished affection smother in the heart every fresh spark which each effort to bring back has re-kindled. "Wherewith," then, "shall it be salted?"

But the recovery is not impossible, and the case, therefore, is not hopeless. The salt may again be salted; the inner life may be revived; the waning strength may be restored; and the salt of grace, now apparently worthless and lost, may yet again be recovered, and prove as sweet and savoury as before. Let it be observed, that Jesus speaks of the salt being *re-salted*. Impossible as this may be to man, with God it is possible. By infusing a new life into the renewed nature, a fresh impartation of grace to the heart; by rekindling the smouldering embers in the soul; and thus by putting his hand again to the entire work of resuscitating, restoring, and reviving the whole *inner man*, the

salt, re-salted, may regain its former sweetness and power. The means by which this great and gracious recovery may be effected, are such as his wisdom will suggest and his sovereignty will adopt. But of this we may rest assured: all will be under the direction of unchangeable love. Whether it may be by the gentle gales of the Spirit, or by the severe tempest of trial, is but of little moment in comparison of the happy and glorious result. If the salt that has lost its savour be but *re-salted*, the mysterious process by which it is effected we will calmly and submissively leave in his hands. "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working," Isa. xxviii. 29.

We would suggest, in concluding this chapter, the Saviour's injunction as supplying an effectual check to this tendency to relapsed influence in the spiritual life,—“Have salt in yourselves.” Adding to this the apostle's exhortation,—“Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt,” Col. iv. 6. Repair constantly to Christ, where a sufficiency of grace for each day, and for each circumstance of each

day, will keep your soul supplied and nourished ; so that while restraining and upholding, sanctifying and comforting grace is abundantly vouchsafed for yourself, the influence of that same grace will make you a far-reaching and an untold blessing to others.

CHAPTER V.

THE RE-QUICKENING OF THE INNER LIFE.

DAVID IN THE DUST, BREATHING AFTER GOD.

"My soul cleaveth unto the dust : quicken thou me according to thy word."—PSA. cxix. 25.

WE have more than once in this work adverted to the indestructible nature of true grace, the deathlessness of God's life in man's soul. But we may associate with this truth another idea. Not only cannot the spiritual life be destroyed—but it cannot even, for any great length of time, be depressed. Such is its divine elasticity—so to speak,—such its vital energy, whatever the superincumbent weight sinking it to the earth, whatever the fetters that would confine it to the dust,—it succeeds eventually in throwing off its pressure, in bursting its bonds, and in soaring again to its native skies. Thus in the lowest spiritual

frame of the child of God, though cleaving even to the dust, there is a divine, ascending power in the soul, which ever lifts it in holy breathings and aspirations after God. Not merely is the principle of spiritual life secured, but its power cannot be destroyed.

How striking the confirmation of this truth afforded by the experience of David—two or three features of whose spiritual history we propose, in the present and succeeding chapters, to review, as illustrative of a relapsed and recovered state of the inner life. We can scarcely imagine a lower depth of sorrow and humiliation to a heavenly mind than that set forth by the words, “My soul cleaveth to the dust,”—prostrated, grovelling in the very earth. And yet, behold the indestructible principle of grace!—his soul mounts heavenward, in the holiest and most spiritual breathings that ever rose from human lips,—“Quicken thou me according to thy word.” May the Spirit of God now be our teacher, and impart to each reader a personal application of his truth, while from these instructive and striking words we consider the

RE-QUICKENING OF THE INNER LIFE OF THE SOUL.

We must not, however, entirely overlook David's painful and humiliating posture and confession,—“My soul cleaveth to the dust.” There is a profound signification in this sentence. Were we to restrict its meaning to the *unconverted state of man*, what words, or what image, could more forcibly and vividly describe and portray that fearful condition? No principle is more true and palpable than that the centre of the soul's moral gravity is *earth*. It originally was heaven: “God made man upright.” The centre of his soul's repose was God. Standing erect in conscious innocence, his countenance, the index of his soul, was elevated, beholding the countenance of his Father and his God.

“Whilst other creatures tow'ards the earth look down,
God gave to man a front sublime, and rais'd
His noble view to ken the starry heavens.”

But falling from that elevation, his soul wandering away from God, earth then became the centre of its gravitation. All his moral and intellectual tendencies are now downward and earthly. It is an awful view to take of a rational and immortal being, and yet from its

truthfulness we dare not shrink. "The first man is of the earth, earthy." He is described as "minding earthly things." Earth is the centre to which all the faculties and powers of his soul tend, the point where all his schemes terminate, the boundary by which all his desires and expectations are limited. This little planet of ours circumscribes all the powers and tendencies, tastes and pursuits, of his rational and deathless mind. Select the most intellectual pursuits, the most refined enjoyments, the most reasonable schemes that ever awoke a thought or inspired a feeling in the natural man, and the utmost we can say of it is—It is of the earth, earthy. His soul cleaveth to the dust; his mind clings to, and grovels upon, the earth. There is nothing of God in his thoughts, of Christ in his affections, or of eternity in his plans. There is no looking beyond this little speck of matter, which, like the insect crawling upon its leaf, seems all the universe to him. As that insect knows nothing of, and cares nothing for, a world teeming with life beyond its infinitesimal boundary, so the carnal mind—alas that an irrational creature should be our comparison!—grovelling upon the ground, sees not

what a world, thinks not what a universe, stretches far away beyond it, of which it soon itself is to be an inhabitant. For this flight of the soul to eternity, for this its solemn appearing in the presence of God—its scrutiny, its judgment, and its destiny,—is there any adequate care, or thought, or preparation? None whatever! Everything else is cared for, prepared for, and thought of, but the soul's departure to the other world. Is not this folly? is it not madness? is it not a crime of the deepest dye? "Earthly, sensual, devilish," he cleaves to the dust. All his enterprises, pleasures, aggrandizements,—magnificent, refined, noble as they are,—spring from the dust, are restricted to the dust, and with the dust they perish for ever. What an awful, yet unexaggerated description, this, of the natural man! Reader, if not a subject of the converting grace of God, *you* are the original of this dark, gloomy, repulsive picture!

But the words upon which we are now commenting are those of a living, heaven-born, heaven-breathing, and heaven-destined soul. They admit us into one of the secrets of the inner and divine life, with which, alas!

we are, the most of us, but too familiar. Shall we attempt an analysis of this peculiar state of spiritual mind, of which David's language is so expressive? It presents a mournful acknowledgment of the influence of an evil nature. David deeply felt this. Flesh in the child of God is as really flesh as in the child of Satan. The old man, the Adamic nature, is precisely the same that it always was. Regeneration does not transform flesh into spirit. It proposes not to eradicate and expel the deep-seated root of our degenerate nature; but it imparts another and a superadded nature,—it implants a new and an antagonistic principle. This new nature is divine; this new principle is holy: and thus the believer becomes the subject of two natures, and his soul a battle-field, upon which a perpetual conflict is going on between the law of the members and the law of the mind; often resulting in his temporary captivity to the law of sin which is in his members. Thus every spiritual mind is painfully conscious of the earthly tendency of his evil nature, and that from the flesh he can derive no sympathy or help, but rather everything that discourages,

encumbers, and retards his spirit in its breathings and strugglings after holiness. His "soul cleaveth to the dust."

A mournful sense of the seductive power of earthly things enters deeply into this state of mind. As we bear about with us, in every step, an earthly nature, it is not surprising that its affinities and sympathies should be earthly; that earthly objects should possess a magnetic influence, perpetually attracting to themselves whatever was congenial with their own nature in the soul of the renewed man. Our homeward path lies through a world captivating and ensnaring. The world, chameleon-like, can assume any colour, and Proteus-like, any shape, suitable to its purpose, and answerable to its end. There is not a mind, a conscience, or a taste, to which it cannot accommodate itself. For the gross, it has sensual pleasures; for the refined, it has polished enjoyments; for the thoughtful, it has intellectual delights; for the enterprising, it has bold, magnificent schemes. The child of God feels this engrossing power; he is conscious of this seductive influence. Worldly applause—who is entirely proof against its power? Human

adulation—who can resist its incense? Creature power—who is free from its captivity? Love of worldly ease and respectability, influence and position; a liking to glide smoothly along the sunny tide of the world's good opinion—who is clad in a coat of mail so impervious as to resist these attacks? Have not the mightiest fallen before them? Such are some only of the many ensnaring influences which weave themselves around the path of the celestial traveller, often extorting from him the humiliating acknowledgment—"My soul cleaveth to the dust."

In this category we may include things which, though they are in themselves of a lawful nature, are yet of an earthly tendency, deteriorative of the life of God in the soul. What heavenly mind is not sadly sensible of this? Our ever-foremost, sleepless, subtle foe, stands by and says, "This is lawful, and you may freely and unrestrictedly indulge in it." But another and a solemn voice is heard issuing from the sacred oracle of truth,—“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient.” And yet, how often are we forced to learn the lesson, that things lawful may, in

their wrong indulgence and influence, become unlawful, through the spiritual leanness which they engender in the soul ! Oh, it is a narrow path which conducts us back to paradise ! But our Lord and Master made it so ; he himself has trodden it, “leaving us an example that we should follow his steps ;” and he, too, is sufficient for its straitness. Yes ; such is the gravitating tendency to earth of the carnal nature within us, we are ever prone and ever ready, at each bland smile of the world, and at each verdant, sunny spot of the wilderness, to retire into the circle of self-complaisance and self-indulgence, and take up our rest where, from the polluted and unsatisfying nature of all earthly things, real rest can never be found. Thus may even lawful affections, and lawful enjoyments, and lawful pursuits and pleasures, wring the confession from the lips of a heavenly-minded man—“My soul cleaveth unto the dust.”

But there is sometimes a casting down to the dust which springs immediately from the mighty hand of God himself. The Lord occasionally brings his people very low. He may lay upon them heavy trial, sore affliction, causing them to ‘lie low in a low place.’ This

is often done to take off the fine edge of their too free indulgences, to humble them in the midst of their too fond enjoyments; and thus to prove their grace, and to exercise their graces, God brings them down even to the dust. "Because we cannot keep our hearts low, therefore God maketh our condition low."

Such, reader, was the low estate of David when he exclaimed, "My soul cleaveth to the dust!" Ah! how many whose eye scans this page may take up and breathe his words! You feel a deadness, a dulness, and an earthliness, in enjoyments, and duties, and privileges, in which your whole soul should be all life, all fervour, all love. You are low where you ought to be elevated; you grovel where you ought to soar; you cleave to the earth where you ought to be embracing the heavens. Your thoughts are low; your affections are low; your feelings are low; your spirits are low; and you seem almost ready to question the existence of the life of God in your soul. But even in this sad and depressed state may there not be something cheering, encouraging, hopeful? There was evidently in David's,—"*My soul cleaveth unto the dust; quicken thou me.*" This was the cheering,

encouraging, hopeful feature in the psalmist's case—his breathing after the re-quickening of the Divine life of his soul. Here was that which marked him a man of God. It was a living man complaining of his deadness, and breathing after more life. It was a heaven-born soul lamenting its earthliness, and panting after more of heaven. It was a spiritual man mourning over his carnality, and praying for more spirituality. It is not the prayer of one conscious of the low state of his soul, and yet satisfied with that state. Perhaps no expression is more familiar to the ear, and no acknowledgment is more frequently on the lips of religious professors, than this. And yet, where is the accompanying effort to rise above it? Where is the putting on of the armour? Where is the conflict? Where is the effort to emerge from the dust, to break away from the enthrallment, and soar into a higher and purer region? Alas! many from whose lips smoothly glides the humiliating confession, still embrace the dust, and seem to love the dust, and never stretch their pinions to rise above it. But let us study closely this lesson of David's experience, that while deep lamentation filled

his heart, and an honest confession breathed from his lips, there was also a breathing, a panting of soul, after a higher and a better state. He seemed to say,—“Lord, I am prostrate, but I long to rise; I am fettered, but I struggle to be free; my soul cleaveth to the dust, but, quicken thou me!” Similar to this was the state of the Church so graphically depicted by Solomon in his Song,—“I sleep, *but my heart waketh.*”

But what does the petition, thus breathed, imply? What does the blessing, thus craved, involve?

First, a restoration of soul from past backslidings. Let the spiritual believer but take the history of a single week as the gauge of the general tenor of his life, and what a lesson does it read to him of the downward, earthly tendency of his soul! Yea, in one short week how have the wheels lessened in their revolutions—how has the timepiece of his soul lost its power—how have the chords of his heart become unstrung! But his prayer is for Divine quickening. What a petition! and what a blessing! “Quicken thou me.” Blessed is that soul that can echo these words. The

Lord quickens the longing souls of his people. "He restoreth my soul," is the testimony not of David only. What do we rank amongst our most prized mercies?—what do we count our sweetest joys?—what constitutes our most hallowed seasons? Are they not the fresh gales of grace from heaven, blowing softly over our souls? and "lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell." What a spring-time of soul is it then! It is a 'little reviving' from the Lord—a quickening of the soul in its dead, wintry state.

This prayer also implies what, alas! is so needful in many, a *re-conversion* of soul. It is a putting of the Lord's hand a second time to the work of grace in the heart. "When thou art converted," said our Lord to Peter, "strengthen thy brethren." What! had not Peter already been converted? Most truly. But although a regenerate man, he had so relapsed in grace as to need a *re-conversion*.

Our Lord's meaning, then, obviously is, "When thou art restored, recovered, re-quickened, then strengthen thy brethren." How many religious professors stand in need of a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit! You, perhaps, my reader, are one. Where is the spiritual vigour you once displayed? where the spiritual joy you once possessed? where the unclouded hope you once indulged? where the humble walk with God you once maintained? where the fragrance that once breathed around you? Alas! your soul cleaveth to the dust; and you need the re-converting grace, the renewed baptism of the Spirit. "Quicken thou me," is your prayer.

A clearer manifestation of Divine life in the soul is not the least blessing contained in this prayer for quickening. How little *realisation* enters into the religion of many! There is the full credence of the judgment to the truth; a conversing about religion, the ministry, and the church. But where is felt the realising power, the earth-fading, heaven-attracting power, of vital godliness in the soul? Dear reader, the hour that will bring your religious profession, your religious creed, your religious notions, to

the test, is at hand ; and the great question in that awful moment will be, “ Am I fit to die ?—have I in my soul the life of God ?—am I born of the Spirit ?—have I a living Christ in my now failing, dying heart ? ” But what a prayer is this in view of a scene and a scrutiny so solemn : “ Quicken thou me ! Lord, quicken thy work in my soul, and strengthen that which thou hast wrought in me. The love that congeals, the faith that trembles, the hope that fluctuates, the joy that droops, do thou inspire with new life, new energy, new power ! It is of little moment what others think of me ; Lord, thou knowest my soul cleaveth to the dust. There is in my heart more of earth than of heaven ; more of self than of Christ ; more of the creature than of God. Thou knowest me in secret—how my grace wanes, how my affections chill, how seldom my closet is visited, how much my Bible is neglected, how insipid to my taste the means of grace, and how irksome and vapid are all spiritual duties and privileges. Lord, stir up thyself to the revivifying of my soul ; quicken, O quicken thou me in thy ways. Enlarge my heart, that I may run the way of thy commandments.”

The argument with which this holy petition is urged is most powerful and prevalent: "According to thy word." According to the *promise* of the word, and the *instrumentality* of the word. Both are engaged to quicken the soul. The promise is most precious: "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine." This precious promise to quicken and revive you, to shed the dews of his grace upon your soul, thus moistening and nourishing the roots and fibres and fruits of the new and heavenly life within you, God stands ready to fulfil in your holy and happy experience: "I will be as the dew unto Israel." Christ is our dew—the dew of his love, the dew of his grace, the dew of his Spirit, is prepared—silent and unseen, but effectual and vivifying—to fall upon the renewed powers of your nature—reviving the work of God in your soul.

But by the *instrumentality* of the word,

the Lord quickens the soul. The word of Christ is “spirit and life;” therefore it is a quickening word. “This is my comfort in my affliction; *for thy word had quickened me.*” Again, “I will never forget thy precepts; *for with them thou hast quickened me.*” Therefore did Jesus pray to his Father in behalf of his Church, “Sanctify them through thy truth.” Thus does the word quicken. We are here constrained to suggest an inquiry—May not the prevalent decay of spiritual life in the church of God,—the low standard of spirituality,—the alarming growth of soul-destroying error,—the startling discovery which some modern teachers appear to have stumbled upon, that doctrines which the church of Christ has ever received as revealed truth, which councils have authorised, and which decretals have embodied, and which the sanctified intellects of master spirits—the Anakims and the Shamgars of polemic divinity and divine philosophy of past ages—have contended for and maintained, are not found in the Bible, but are the visionary dogmata of a bygone age,—we say, may not these prevalent evils be mainly attributable to the contempt thrown upon the word of God?

We verily and solemnly believe it to be so. We need to be constantly reminded that the great regenerator and emancipator of the world is the Bible,—that nothing short of this will disturb the spiritual death which universally prevails, and that nothing short of this will free the human mind from the shackles of error and superstition which enslave at this moment nearly two-thirds of the human race. This “Sword of the Spirit,”—like that of Goliath, “there is none like it”—has overcome popery and infidelity, and, unimpaired by the conflict, it is ready to overcome them yet again. “What Sheridan said of the liberty of the press,” are the eloquent words of a departed divine, “admits of most emphatic application to the religion of truth and liberty: ‘Give,’ says that orator, ‘give to ministers a corrupt House of Commons; give them a pliant and servile House of Lords; give them the keys of the Treasury, and the patronage of the Crown; and give me the liberty of the press, and with this mighty engine I will overthrow the fabric of corruption, and establish upon its ruins the rights and privileges of the people.’ In like manner, . . . give me the circulation of

the Bible, and with this mighty engine I will overthrow the tyranny of Antichrist, and establish the fair and original form of Christianity." O that in this day of sad departure from the word of God, we may rally round the Bible in closer and more united phalanx! Firm in the belief of its divinity, strong in the conviction of its potency, may we go forth in the great conflict of truth and error, wielding no weapon but the "Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." In all our spiritual relapses, too, may the word of the Lord quicken us: may it, like a mighty lever, raise our soul from the dust to which it so much cleaves!

And what will be some of the *effects* of a revived, re-quickened state of the inner life? Oh, many and blessed! Then will follow a clearer perception of Divine truth, the meaning and beauty of which, now so much obscured by reason of the dust which adhereth to the soul, will appear in clearer and richer lustre. The public means of grace will be seen to be Divinely appointed and indispensably needful. Vain excuse for their neglect will be laid aside, and the Sabbath and the week-day services will find you at your "well," waiting for Him

who stands by it, to draw the water and give you to drink. Private duties will be sought more eagerly, and will be found more precious. The dust will be swept from your Bible, and the smouldering embers be rekindled upon your altar, and you will be found "watching daily at the Lord's gates, waiting at the posts of his door." The seal of adoption more deeply impressed upon your heart, you will have a more vivid sense of your sonship, and "Abba, Father," will oftener breathe from your lips. Tribulation and suffering—the cup which your Heavenly Father may give you to drink—will then be received without a question, and be drunk without a murmur. Your moral influence, now so greatly impaired, will then, in the exhibition of a more healthy profession of Christianity, of a more holy and consistent example, be felt, acknowledged, and honoured. These are but a mere tithe of the blessings which will result from your re-quickenings.

We may here meet a question which has often been asked by those who are conscious of a relapsed state of soul. "Am I still to be found in spiritual duties and enjoyments while sensible of a backsliding state of heart from

God?" To this we reply,—The warrant of a Christian's duty is not the measure of his grace, but the command of his God. If this be so—and we have no reason to question its truth—then be your state of soul low as it may, you are bound to meet all those obligations and to discharge all those duties which a profession of Christ enjoins, irrespective of the spiritual and mental fluctuations to which the soul is always exposed. Unless aware of his design, Satan will here attain a great advantage over you. Assuming the form of an angel of light, and with angelic gentleness and plausibility, he will suggest that your frame of soul is too torpid and lifeless and dull to draw near to God. That your affections are too frigid, your love too congealed, your heart too carnal, your mind too grovelling, your pursuits too earthly, your backslidings too great, your neglects too many to take to Christ. He will hold up to view the folly and the hypocrisy and the inconsistency of being found in the employment and use of holy and spiritual duties, while your soul thus cleaves to the dust. But listen not to his false suggestions, and

heed not his sophistical reasoning, no not for a moment. It is only in the way of waiting upon God that you will be recovered from the lapsed state of your soul. In the way of meditation, of confession, of tears, of prayer, you may yet rise from the dust, and with bolder pinion, and richer plumage, and sweeter song, soar to the gate of heaven, and return again, scattering around you its blessings, and reflecting its glory. Oh! go to Jesus, then, however low and discouraging your spiritual state may be, and relax not a single mean of grace.

Suffer a closing exhortation. Beware how you clog yourself needlessly with the dust; there is no necessity wherefore you should cling to it. It is most true, that in the dust of self-abasement you cannot lie too deeply. "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," says the repentant Job. "He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope," says the weeping Jeremiah. But the dust of earthly pursuits and pleasures become you not as a heaven-born soul. The dust is the serpent's meat, not the aliment of a renewed mind. You were born again—not

to dig into the earth with the mole, but to soar to the heavens with the eagle. Your God is in heaven, your Saviour is in heaven, the glorified saints are in heaven; and in faith, and in hope, and in conversation, you should be in heaven also. Then clog not yourself needlessly with dust. Be not in haste to be rich. Be not anxious after great worldly enterprises, magnificent schemes, with a view merely of accumulating wealth. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." Be content with God's disposal of you, and with his allotment to you. Walking uprightly and in his fear, you shall want no good thing. "He will never leave you, nor forsake you, so that you may boldly say, The Lord is my helper." Let the world, and worldly things, sit lightly upon you. Its smiles and its frowns, its caresses and its woundings, are but for a moment—and then all will for ever have fled. "Brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that buy as though they pos-

sessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world PASSETH AWAY." Arise, then, and shake thyself from the dust, and put on thy beautiful garments, and array thyself in thy costly ornaments—the righteousness of the incarnate God, and the graces of the sanctifying Spirit. Thus quickened and revived, thus rising from the dust to which your soul has so long been cleaving, O how sweetly will you sing as heavenward you soar!—"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." Go to Jesus just as you are. Take your deadness to Christ,—take your barrenness to Christ,—take your decay to Christ,—take to Christ your frame of mind just as it is. Jesus stands between you and God, prepared to present *to* God every sigh, and groan, and desire, and tear, and request; and to convey *from* God every blessing, covenant, blood-purchased blessing, which it is possible for him to give, or needful for you to

receive. Exult in the prospect of soon reaching heaven, where there are no frosts to congeal, where there is no blight to wither, and where no earthly tendencies will ever weigh down to the dust the life of God in your soul.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PENITENCE AND PRAYER OF THE INNER LIFE.

THE BROKEN AND CONTRITE HEART.

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."—PSALM li. 17.

It has been the lowly but the earnest attempt of the preceding pages to stir up the grace of God in the living, believing soul. There is not a moment in the history of the child of God—even those moments that would appear the most favourable to the progress of the Divine life—but there is a tendency in that grace to descend. We have seen how affluent the Word of God is in its metaphorical elucidation of this important subject. And if the figure of 'gray hairs'—of 'wells without water'—of the 'salt that has lost its savour,' can at all

depict this melancholy condition of the soul's spiritual deterioration, then is the sad portrait presented to our view in its most vivid colouring, as drawn by the hand of a Divine master. Although we might have dwelt much longer on this part of our general subject,—for we have by no means exhausted all the metaphors of the Bible illustrative of a relapsed state of the spiritual life—but anxious to apply to the disease we have been probing—we hope with not too rude a hand—the Divine balm which the Great Healer has mercifully provided, we leave at this stage of our work the consideration of the relapse, and pass on to that of the *recovery*,—praying, that if to the mind of the reader there is any real discovery of the low state of his soul, if any true and powerful concern as to that state, if any secret contrition, any lowly repentance, and any breathing after a better and a revived condition of the inner life, the words of the royal penitent, which we are about to open up, may fall upon his wounded spirit like balsam from the bleeding tree—with an influence soothing, cheering, and healing. How sweet and expressive are the words—“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken

and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise !” In further prosecution of our design, let us direct our attention to this broken heart, as unfolding the certain evidence of a recovered state of spiritual relapse,—and then, to God’s especial regard for it, as constituting the great encouragement to our return.

The subject enters deeply into the very soul of real, vital religion. All other religion that excludes as its basis the state of mind portrayed in these words, is as the shell without the pearl, the body without the spirit. It has ever been a leading and favourite scheme of Satan to persuade men to substitute the religion of man for the religion of God. The religion of man has assumed various forms and modifications, always accommodating itself to the peculiar age and history of the world. Sometimes it has been the religion of intellect—and men have prostrated themselves before the goddess of reason. Sometimes it has been the religion of creeds—and men have prided themselves upon the bulwarks of a well-balanced and accurate orthodoxy. At other times it has been the religion of the ascetic and the recluse—and men have fled from the dwellings

of the living, and have entombed themselves in caves and dungeons of the earth. Yet again, it has been the religion of forms and ceremonies—and men have strutted forth in the fancied habiliments of superior sanctity. And thus we might proceed almost *ad infinitum*. All these are human religions, invented by Satan, and palmed upon the world as the religion of God. We have observed that the religion of man—be its form what it may—has ever kept at the remotest distance from the spiritual; every thing that brought the mind in contact with truth, and the conscience and the heart into close converse with itself and with God, it has studiously and carefully avoided,—and thus it has evaded that state and condition of the moral man which constitutes the very soul of the religion of God—"the broken and contrite heart."

There is a sense in which the history of the world is the history of broken hearts. Were the epitaph of many over whose graves—those "mountain-peaks of a new and distant world"—we thoughtlessly pass, faithfully inscribed upon the marble tablet that rears above them so proudly its beautifully chiselled form, it

would be this—"DIED OF A BROKEN HEART." Worldly adversity, blighted hope, the iron heel of oppression, or the keen tongue of slander, crushed the sensitive spirit, and it fled where the rude winds blow not, and "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." Passing beyond the limit of time, we visit in imagination the gloomy precincts of the lost, and lo! we find that the abodes of the finally impenitent are crowded with weeping, mourning, despairing souls. Yes! there are broken hearts there,—and there are tears there,—and there is repentance there, such as the betrayer of his Lord felt, ere he "went to his own place,"—but, alas! it is the "sorrow of the world, which worketh death." In all this grief there enters nothing of that element which gives its character and complexion to the sorrow of David—the broken and contrite heart, the sacrifice of God which he despiseth not. A man may weep, and a lost soul may despair, from the *consequences* of sin; but in that sorrow and in that despair there shall be no real heartfelt grief for *sin itself*, as a thing against a holy and a righteous God. But we are now to contemplate, not the broken spirit merely, but

the *contrite* heart also—the sorrow of sincere repentance and deep contrition springing up in the soul *for sin*—its exceeding sinfulness and abomination in the sight of God.

The state which we have now in contemplation defines *the first stage in conversion*. The repentance which is enkindled in the heart at the commencement of the Divine life, may be legal and tending to bondage; nevertheless it is a spiritual, godly sorrow for sin, and is ‘unto life.’ The newly awakened and aroused sinner may at first see nothing of Christ, he may see nothing of the blood of atonement, and of God’s great method of reconciliation with him, he may know nothing of faith in Jesus as the way of peace to his soul—yet, he is a true and sincere spiritual penitent. The tear of holy grief is in his eye,—ah! we forget not with what ease some can weep; there are those the fountain of whose sensibility lies near the surface; an arousing discourse, an affecting book, a thrilling story, will quickly moisten the eye,—but still we must acknowledge that the religion of Jesus is the religion of sensibility; that there is no godly repentance without feeling, and no spiritual contrition apart from deep emotion.

Yes ! the tear of holy grief is in his eye ; and if ever it is manly to weep, surely it is now, when for the first time the soul that had long resisted every appeal to its moral consciousness, is now smitten to the dust, the heart of adamant broken, and the lofty spirit laid low before the cross of Jesus. O it is a holy and a lovely spectacle, upon which angels, and the Lord of angels himself, must look with ineffable delight. Reader, have you reached this the primary stage in the great change of conversion ? Have you taken this the first step in the soul's travel towards heaven ? It is the knowledge of the disease which precedes the application to the remedy ; it is the consciousness of the wound which brings you into contact with the Healer and the healing. O who, once having experienced the truth, would wish to escape this painful and humiliating process ? who would refuse to drink the wormwood and the gall, if only along this path he could reach the sunlight spot where the smiles of a sin-pardoning God fall in focal glory and power ? Who would not bare his bosom to the stroke, when the hand that plucks the dart and heals the wound, is the hand through whose palm the rough nail was

driven,—“wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities?” Who would not endure the uneasiness of sin, but to feel the rest that Jesus gives to the weary? and who would not experience the mourning for transgression, but to know the comfort which flows from the loving heart of Christ? Again the question is put—has the Spirit of God revealed to you the inward plague, has he brought you just as you are to Jesus, to take your stand upon the doctrine of his unmerited, unpurchased mercy—asking for pardon as a beggar, praying for your discharge as a bankrupt, and beseeching him to take you as a homeless wanderer into the asylum of his loving and parental heart?

But the state of holy contrition which we are describing marks also a more advanced stage in the experience of the spiritual man; a stage which defines one of the most interesting periods of the Christian's life—the *Divine restoring*. David was a backslider. Deeply and grievously had he departed from God. But he was a *restored* backslider, and, in the portion we are now considering, we have the unfoldings of his sorrow-stricken, penitent, and broken heart,—

forming, perhaps, to some who read this page, the sweetest portion of God's word. But of the truth of this we are quite assured, that in proportion as we are brought into the condition of godly sorrow for sin, deep humiliation for our backslidings from God, our relapses, and declensions in grace, there is no portion of the sacred word that will so truly express the deep emotions of our hearts, no language so fitted to clothe the feelings of our souls, as this psalm of the royal penitent: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." Thus upon the altar of God he lays the sacrifice of a broken heart, and seems to exclaim, "Wretch that I am to have forsaken such a God, to have left such a Father, Saviour and Friend. Has he ever been unto me a wilderness, a barren land? Never! Have I

ever found him a broken cistern? Never! Has he ever proved to me unkind, unfaithful, untrue? Never! What! did not God satisfy me, had not Jesus enough for me, did not a throne of grace make me happy, that I should have turned my back upon such a God, should have forsaken such a bosom as Christ's, and slighted the spot where my heavenly Father had been so often wont to meet and commune with me? Lord! great has been my departure, grievous my sin, and now most bitter is my sorrow;—here at thy feet, upon thine altar, red with the blood of thine own sin-atonement sacrifice, I lay my poor, broken, contrite heart, and beseech thee to accept and heal it.”

“Behold, I fall before thy face;
My only refuge is thy grace.
No outward forms can make me clean,
The leprosy lies deep within.”

Such is the holy contrition which the Spirit of God works in the heart of the restored believer. Such is the recovery of the soul from its spiritual and mournful relapse. Brought beneath the cross and in the sight of the crucified Saviour, the heart is broken, the spirit is melted, the eye weeps, the tongue confesses,

the bones that were broken rejoice, and the contrite child is once more clasped in his Father's forgiving, reconciled embrace. "He restoreth my soul," is his grateful and adoring exclamation. O what a glorious God is ours, and what vile wretches are we !

But there is one declaration of the royal penitent which enunciates a most precious truth—the Lord's especial regard for the broken and the contrite heart. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, *thou wilt not despise.*" There are those by whom it is despised. Satan despises it,—though he trembles at it. The world despises it,—though it stands in awe of it. The Pharisee despises it,—though he attempts its counterfeit. But there is one who despises it not. "THOU wilt not despise it," exclaims this penitent child, with his eye upon the loving heart of his God and Father. But why does God not only not despise it, but delights in and accepts it? Because he sees in it a holy and a fragrant sacrifice. It is a sacrifice, because it is offered to God, and not to man. It is an oblation laid upon his altar. Moses never presented such an oblation—Aaron never offered such a sacrifice in all the gifts which

he offered, in all the victims which he slew. And while some have cast their rich and splendid gifts into the treasury, or have laid them ostentatiously upon the altar of Christian benevolence, God has stood by the spot to which some poor penitent has brought his broken heart for sin, the incense of which has gone up before Him as a most precious and fragrant sacrifice. Upon that oblation, upon that gift, his eye has been fixed, as if one object, and one only, had arrested and absorbed his gaze,—it was a poor, broken heart that lay bleeding and quivering upon His altar. It is a sacrifice, too, offered upon the basis of the atoning sacrifice of his dear Son—the only sacrifice that satisfies Divine justice—and this makes it precious to God. So infinitely glorious is the atonement of Jesus, so divine, so complete, and so honouring to every claim of his moral government, that he accepts each sacrifice of prayer, of praise, of penitence, and of personal consecration, laid in faith by the side and upon that one infinite Sacrifice for sin. He recognises in it, too, the work of his own Spirit. When the Spirit of God moved upon the face of unformed nature, and a new world sprang into life,

light, and beauty, he pronounced it *very good*. But what must be his estimate of that new creation which his Spirit has wrought in the soul, whose moral chaos he has reduced to life, light, and order! If God so delighted in the material and the perishable creation, how deep and ineffable must be his delight in the spiritual and the imperishable creation! If such his satisfaction at a new-born world, destined so soon to be marred by sin, and smitten by the curse, and consumed by the flames—what think you must be his satisfaction in beholding a world springing from its ruins, whose purity sin shall never deface, whose loveliness no curse shall ever blight, and whose duration shall survive in ever-growing and imperishable beauty and grandeur the destruction of all worlds!

But in what way does God evince his satisfaction with, and his delight in, the broken and contrite heart? We answer—first, by the manifestation of his power in healing it. There are two portions of God's word in which this truth is strikingly brought out. Psa. cxlvii. 3, "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." In Isa. lxi. 1, the office of Jesus as a Divine healer is with signal beauty

set forth:—"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to *bind up the broken-hearted*." Never did a physician more delight to display his skill, or exercise the benevolent feelings of his nature in the alleviation of suffering, than does Jesus in his work of binding up, soothing and healing the heart broken for sin, by speaking a sense of pardon, and applying to it the balsam of his own most precious blood. But our Lord not only heals the contrite heart, but as if heaven had not sufficient attraction as his dwelling-place, he comes down to earth and makes that heart his abode: "Thus saith the Lord, To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word," Isa. lxvi. 2. And again, "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." What, dear, humble penitent, could give you such a view of the interest which Christ takes in your case—the delight with

which he contemplates your contrition, and the welcome and the blessing which he is prepared to bestow upon you, on your casting yourself down at his feet, nay, in throwing yourself in his very arms, wide expanded to receive you, than this fact, that he waits to make that sorrow-stricken heart of yours his chief and loved abode—reviving it, healing it, and enshrining himself for ever within its renewed and sanctified affections.

Thus we have attempted to describe the two-fold process by which the lapsed state of the inner life is arrested and restored,—this process, as we have shown, consisting in the knowledge which the believer entertains of the real state of the spiritual life in his soul, and then in the godly sorrow, the holy contrition, which that discovery produces. What more shall we say? One thing only.—Be your state what it may, seek, cherish, and cultivate constantly and habitually—a broken heart for sin. Think not that it is a work which once done is to be done no more. Deem it not a primary stage in your spiritual journey, which once reached, never again occurs in your celestial progress. O no! As in the natural life we enter the world weep-

ing and leave it weeping, so in the spiritual life—we begin it in tears of godly sorrow for sin, and we terminate it in tears of godly sorrow for sin,—passing away to that blessed state of sinlessness where God will wipe away all tears from our eyes. The indwelling of all evil—the polluting nature of the world along which we journey—our constant exposure to temptations of every kind—the many occasions on which we yield to those temptations,—the perpetual developments of sin unseen, unknown, even unsuspected by others,—the defilement which attaches itself to all that we put our hands to, even the most spiritual and holy and heavenly,—the consciousness of what a holy God must every moment see in us,—all, all these considerations should lead us to cherish that spirit of lowliness and contrition, self-abhorrence and self-renunciation, inward mortification and outward humility of deportment, which belong to, and which truly prove the existence of, the life of God in our souls.

And what, too, prompts a constant travelling to the atoning blood—what endears the Saviour who shed that blood? What is it that makes his flesh meat indeed, and his blood drink

indeed? What is it that keeps the conscience tender and clean? What enables the believer to walk with God as a dear child? O it is the secret contrition of the lowly spirit, springing from a view of the cross of Jesus, and through the cross leading to the heart of God.

Your religion, dear reader, is a vain religion, if there enter not into it the essential element of a broken and a contrite heart for sin. With Job you may have heard of Jesus "with the hearing of the ear," but not with him, have "abhorred yourself, and repented in dust and in ashes." Oh! with all your gettings, get, I beseech you, a broken heart for sin. God can have no transactions with you in the great matter of your soul's salvation, but as he sees you prostrate at his feet in repentance, humiliation, and confession. He will only treat with you for the stupendous blessings of pardon, justification, and adoption, in the character and posture of a broken-hearted sinner, urging your suit through the mediation of a broken-hearted Saviour. He can negotiate only on those terms which justify and magnify the stupendous sacrifice of his only-begotten and well-beloved Son. If, then, you value your eternal interests,

if you cherish any proper regard for the final happiness of your soul—if you wish to escape the wrath to come—the undying worm, the quenchless flame, the unutterable, interminable torments of the lost,—if you shrink from the risk, the almost certain risk, involved in the circumstances of your final sickness, and a dying hour—then *repent*, repent sincerely, repent deeply, repent evangelically, repent—NOW ! For, “ God NOW commandeth all men everywhere to REPENT, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness.”

Backsliding Christian ! do you feel within your heart the kindlings of godly sorrow ? Are you mourning over your wandering, loathing the sin that drew you from Christ, that grieved his Spirit, and wounded your own peace ? Are you longing to feed again in the green pastures of the flock, and by the side of the Shepherd of the flock, assured once more that you are a true sheep, belonging to the one fold, known by, and precious to, the heart of Him who laid down his life for the sheep ? Then approach the altar of Calvary, and upon it lay the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite

heart, and thy God will accept it. The door of your return stands open—the pierced heart of Jesus. The golden sceptre that bids you approach is extended—the outstretched hand of a pacified Father. The banquet is ready, and the minstrels are tuning their harps to celebrate the return from your wanderings to your Father's heart and home, with the gladness of feasting, and with the voice of thanksgiving and of melody.

“Return, O wanderer, return!

And seek an injured Father's face;
Those warm desires that in thee burn
Were kindled by recovering grace.

“Return, O wanderer, return!

Thy Saviour bids thy spirit live;
Go to his bleeding side, and learn
How freely Jesus can forgive.

“Return, O wanderer, return!

Regain thy lost lamented rest;
Jehovah's melting bowels yearn
To clasp his Ephraim to his breast.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE RENEWED ANOINTING OF THE INNER LIFE.

THE FRESH OIL.

"I shall be anointed with fresh oil."—PSA. xcii. 10.

DAVID,—the evidence of whose spiritual restoration we have just been contemplating, in the deep, lowly contrition of his penitent heart—presents to our view, in the present subject, another and a deeply interesting phase of the recovered life of God in the soul. As a personal type of Christ, he, like his Divine and glorious Prototype, was an anointed "priest upon his throne." Upon his head the holy oil had been poured, setting him apart as king of Israel; and, as one of the "royal priesthood," he shared in that divine and holy anointing, by which all the "kings and priests of God" are consecrated, and of which they all alike partake.

But was this single act of anointing sufficient for David? Nay, conscious of the perpetual tendency of the grace within to decay, sensible of those spiritual relapses to which the inner life is ever exposed, he felt the necessity, and earnestly sought the application, of the renewed anointing, by which alone he could be “strengthened with all might in the inner man.” Nothing could more clearly betray the present state of David’s soul than the words, the precious meaning of which we propose endeavouring to unfold—“I shall be anointed with fresh oil.” There is an evident consciousness of loss, a sense of deterioration, a conviction of relapse. The fragrance and the power of the former anointing were felt in a measure to have gone; and, painfully alive to the loss the anointed of the Lord breathes the deep desire for, and expresses the full expectation of, the *renewed* anointing of the Holy Ghost in the inner life of his soul. The subject must be deeply interesting to the true Christian. Let us consider the anointing—the decay of the anointing—and the renewal of the anointing.

“The Lord’s anointed” is the expressive and appropriate designation of all the Lord’s

people. This anointing it is that marks them as a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." It is the Lord's peculiar mark upon them which distinguishes and designates them as his own. All who are strangers to this anointing are strangers to the grace of God, and the calling of the Holy Ghost. There may be much spiritual light in the judgment, and even an open profession of religion before the world, added to which there shall be something of Jehu's "zeal for the Lord;" and yet that anointing of the Holy Spirit be still wanting, apart from which all intellectual illumination, and outward profession, and party zeal, pass for nothing with a heart-searching God. As the proper signification of the endeared name *Christ*, is *anointed*, so the true signification of the honoured appellation *Christian*, points us to the anointing, of which all who have union with Christ personally share. I believe the remark to be as solemn as it is true, that eternity will only fully unfold the amount of evil that has sprung from calling those *Christians* who call themselves Christians, without any valid title to the high, holy, and distin-

guished appellation. How imperfectly are men in general aware of the deep, the awful, the spiritual import of the term! They think not, they know not, that a Christian is one who partakes, in his renewing, sanctifying grace, of that same Divine Holy Spirit with which Christ was anointed of the Father for his great work.

Our first inquiry relates to the anointing oil itself. What is its nature? Of what is it composed? Truly it is most costly, precious, and fragrant. Let the type explain: "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty shekels, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty shekels, and of cassia five hundred shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, and of olive oil an hin: and thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be an holy anointing oil," Exod. xxx. 22—25. Then observe the use to which Moses was to appropriate this anointing oil: "And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate

them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, This shall be an holy anointing oil unto me throughout your generations," ver. 30, 31. Another reference to this anointing oil occurs in a deeply interesting connection. We allude to this same anointing of Aaron, the nature of which is used to symbolise the beauty and fragrance of brotherly love : " Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity ! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garment," Psa. cxxxiii. 1, 2. Thus valuable and cheering is the communion of saints ! and they who partake the most richly of the anointing of Christ's Spirit in their hearts, feel the most deeply, and exemplify the most fully, on all occasions, sweet and holy love to all who bear the image of the Father, and who breathe the spirit of the Saviour, whatever be their creed or name. O let it not be forgotten, that one of the strongest evidences of our personal possession of this anointing, one of the most indubitable marks of our union to the

kingdom of priests, is, *our love to the brethren!* How valuable and costly must true *Christian unity* be, when it is compared by the Holy Ghost to the precious unguent poured over the person of God's High Priest. "By this shall all men know," says our spiritual Aaron, "that ye are my disciples, because ye have love one to another."

But the type sets forth the anointing oil, or, in other words, the true spiritual anointing of every believer in Jesus, in three of its essential features. Its *costliness*. It is costly oil, because it is Divine. The Holy Spirit renews, sanctifies, and inhabits the believer as a Divine person. It is not the common light of nature, nor the ordinary teaching of man, nor the moral suasion of truth, which has made him what he is—an experimental CHRISTIAN: all his real grace, his true teaching, flows from the Divine Spirit. His light is divine, his renewing is divine, his comfort is divine, his sanctification is divine, and must, therefore, be essentially most costly. Oh, there is more real value in one ray of the Spirit's light, beaming in upon a man's soul, than in all the teaching which books can ever impart! The Divine

Spirit, loosing the seals of the written Word, and unfolding to him the mysteries of the kingdom, the glories of Christ's person, the perfection of Christ's work, the fulness of Christ's grace, the revealed mind and will of God, has in it more worth and glory than all the teaching the schools ever imparted. This oil is costly, then, because it is Divine. What shall we say of its *preciousness*? How precious the grace of the Holy Spirit, what tongue is sufficiently gifted to describe? How precious is his indwelling—an ever-ascending, heaven-panting, God-thirsting, Christ-desiring Spirit! How precious are all the revelations he makes of Christ! How precious are the consolations he brings, the promises he seals, the teachings he imparts; all the emotions he awakens, the breathings he inspires, and the affections he creates; how precious are those graces in the soul of which he is the Author, —the faith that leads to a precious Saviour, the love that rises to a gracious God, and the holy affections which flow forth to all the saints! And how shall we speak of its *fragrance*? No art of the apothecary can imitate it. One drop of this holy oil, falling

upon the soul, breathes around it a perfume like that of heaven. There is a fragrance in the man's spirit, in his conversation, in his example, in his very look, that speaks of the holy anointing: "The ointment of the right hand betrayeth him." There is a savour of Christ, a heavenliness of temper, a kind of divinity of soul, which mark him as belonging to the "royal priesthood." One drop of this costly, precious anointing oil, fills the whole house with its perfume. There is a peace in that abode, a light in that dwelling, an order, and regularity, and affection in that family, which distinguish it as the residence of a royal priest. And travel where he may, sojourn with whom he will, that anointed believer carries the conviction to the heart, and awakens the exclamation from the lip, "By this I know that thou art a man of God, for the anointing of the Holy One is upon thee." Thus fragrant is this anointing oil.

But through what channel does this anointing come? Only through the union of the believer to Christ the Anointed One. All the saving operations of the Spirit upon the mind are connected with Jesus. If he convinces of sin, it

is to lead to the blood of Jesus ; if he reveals the corruptions of the heart, it is to lead to the grace of Jesus ; if he teaches the soul's ignorance, it is to conduct it to the feet of Jesus—thus all his operations in the soul are associated with Jesus. Now, in conducting this holy anointing into the soul, he brings it through the channel of our union with the Anointed Head. By making us one with Christ, he makes us partakers of the anointing of Christ. And truly is the weakest, lowliest believer, one with this anointed Saviour. His fitness, as the Anointed of God, to impart of the plenitude of his anointing to all the members of his body, is a truth clearly and beautifully set forth. Thus is he revealed as the Anointed Head of the Church, the great High Priest of the royal priesthood : “ Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness ; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows,” *Psa. lxxv. 7.* “ The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me ; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek,” *Isa. lxi. 1.* In the Acts of the Apostles, x. 38, a distinct reference is made to this truth : “ How God anointed Jesus of

Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power." It was this anointing that was upon Christ that led the Church of old to exclaim, in the fervour of her love, "Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love thee," Song Sol. i. 3. His human soul, filled with the measureless influence of the Divine Spirit, the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily, he became the true Aaron, of whose anointing all the priests were alike to partake. One, then, with Jesus, through the channel of his union to the Head, the lowest member is anointed with this precious oil.

The *effects* of this anointing are what might be expected from a cause so glorious. It *beautifies* the soul. It is that anointing spoken of by the Psalmist: "And oil to make his face to shine," Psa. civ. 15. Therefore is it called the "beauties of holiness." How does a man's face shine—how is his countenance lighted up—when the joy of the Lord is his strength, when the Spirit of adoption is in his soul, when the love of God is shed abroad in his heart! It *gladdens*, too. Therefore it is called the "oil of joy," and "the oil of gladness." It

causes the heart to sing in its deep sorrows, imparts the "garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," and fills the soul with the glory of that "kingdom which consists not in meats and in drinks, but in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Another effect springing from this anointing is the deep *teaching* it imparts: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him," 1 John ii. 20, 27. Such are some of the effects of this holy anointing. It beautifies, gladdens, and teaches.

And is there a possibility of the *decay* of this anointing? May its power lessen, and its fragrance evaporate? We fear the possibility of this melancholy change is but too true. That the true priesthood of the Lord can entirely lose this Divine anointing, we do not for one moment assert. Never more will God withdraw his Spirit where he has once implanted the precious gift. We speak it solemnly for

the glory of God, we utter it confidently for the comfort of the weak-minded, those who are of a fearful heart,—that when once God has poured this anointing upon a soul, that soul shall never utterly and for ever lose it. To every foe that seeks its destruction, to all the hostile influences opposed to its well-being, God will utter his solemn words of warning: “Do mine anointed no harm.” Yea, there is that in the very anointing itself that forms a shield around the royal priest.

But, sad truth—there is not a stronger evidence of the lessening of a man’s grace, of the declension of the inner life, of the backsliding of his heart, of the spiritual leanness of his soul, than is found in the decay of this anointing. It may lose its freshness, shed no fragrance, impart no power, and scarcely be discernible in the character and tone of the believer’s piety. How may we trace this melancholy state—this evaporation of the anointing oil? Various: in the matter of real, close transaction with God,—where there is the decay of the Divine anointing, there is but little dealing between God and the soul,—the walk is distant—the spirit is shy; searching

of heart, and confession of sin, and dealing with the blood, are things laid aside for a more convenient season. The *want of real power in prayer* betrays the loss ; perhaps in nothing is it more evident. The habit of prayer may not be suspended ; the form of prayer is still observed : but there is no life, nor power, nor unction in prayer ; no taking of heaven with holy violence ; no wrestling with the Angel of the Covenant ; no taking hold of God's strength ; no grasping the promise of God, or leaning upon God in the promise ; no real faith to believe that God will perform what he has engaged to do. And why ?—because there is a decay of the anointing, and with it a decay of the spirit and power of prayer. We listen to his voice in supplication, but we feel his loss in our own soul. There is nothing in his prayer that breaks our heart, that embitters sin, that leads us to Christ, that lifts our soul from the dust into the sweet sunshine of communion with God ; and we are forced to trace it to the lack of that Divine and holy oil which maketh the face to shine, and which, in its reflected lustre, throws a radiance over the countenance of others. In *Christian inter-*

course, too, we are sensible of the lack. The little sparks that we strike, fall upon no kindling material. In vain we endeavour to light up his soul; dampness, coldness, and deathliness seem to extinguish every effort. We can extract nothing that imparts an elevation to our own, perhaps, depressed minds. There is no savour in his salt, no water in his well, no rays of warmth radiating from his soul; but a dryness, a deadness, a deteriorating influence, of which every spiritual mind brought in contact with him is sensible. We speak to him of Jesus, but the echo is faint; we talk of the blessedness of holding communion with God, and we advance the sentiment that the throne of grace is the sweetest, loveliest, holiest spot on earth—but there is no cordial response. Indeed, there is nothing that lifts us up, but everything, rather, that depresses and that sinks us. We are painfully conscious that we have spent an hour in the society of one whose intercourse has occasioned us a serious loss. We feel as if we had been in the contiguity of an iceberg, the influence of which has sunk the spiritual thermometer of our souls well nigh to its lowest point. And what is the cause?

—our brother has lost the power and freshness of the anointing oil in his soul. In another, this decay may be traced in his *low views of Christ*, with the invariable accompaniment of *high thoughts of himself*. He has low views of the personal glory of the Saviour, the sight of which ought to fill his soul with adoring transport. He has depreciating views of the atoning blood of the Saviour, the thought of which should fill his mouth with the highest praise. He seldom contemplates that glory; he rarely travels to that blood; and the mournful consequence is, his little love to Christ. And what is the cause?—his distance from the Anointed One. He has left the feet of the true Aaron, like Peter, and has mixed himself up with the world, like Ephraim; and so has lost the Christ-endearing, Christ-exalting, self-abasing influence of the Divine anointing. In yet others it may be traced in *an uncertain state of mind as to their personal acceptance*. Inquire what they know of the Spirit's witness—of a well-founded hope of heaven—of the joy of pardoned sin? Nothing! Lacking that inward anointing which enlightens, confirms, and strengthens the soul in the joyous con-

sciousness of its acceptance, they seem to dwell for ever in the region of doubt and uncertainty, of agitation and fear, as to their personal salvation.

What are some of the *causes* to the operation of which we are to trace an effect so sad? Many are the deteriorating influences to which the anointing of the Christian is exposed. The influence of the world is injurious. There are few who can have much transaction with it, even in a lawful way, and not be conscious of real spiritual loss. But few Christians can bear up against it. There are but few THORNTONS, we fear, in the commercial world—men who build their sacred oratories by the side of their banking and their counting-houses—and who, from the world's turmoil, are wont to retire and hold communion with God. Anointed Christian, the world in which you live, through which you journey, is the great foe to that sacred anointing that is upon you! Therefore would we say—beware of it! Give it no advantage over you; mix not unnecessarily with it; float not down with its tide; be not eager for its wealth. Grind not the faces of the poor; oppress not the needy; withhold not from the hireling his wages. Conform not to its plea-

tures ; countenance not its public amusements. Bear not the sacred unction into the world's light, earthly, polluted, God-disowning, and Christ-dishonouring atmosphere. The opera, and the semi-theatrical oratorio—even though the passion and the agonies of the Divine Messiah are set to the gamut—and the ball-room, are not seemly places for him upon whose head the sacred anointing oil has been shed. To this power of the world, may be added those unfavourable influences arising from unmortified sin, from known derelictions of duty, and from intercourse with cold, lifeless professors of religion—all of which tend to absorb the sacred fluid.

But let us turn to a more pleasing theme—the renewal of this Divine anointing : “ I shall be anointed with *fresh* oil.”

That David felt conscious of the evaporation there can be no question. But with this conviction he was not content to remain. He panted for more life ; he longed for more quickening ; he lifted up his soul for the renewed anointing : “ I shall be anointed with *fresh* oil.” That the Lord re-anoints his people, who can doubt ? Alas for them, if He did not ! The ample pro-

vision which he has made for the exigence proves it. There is more of the precious oil in the sacred Vessel! O blessed, holy, comforting truth to those who, mournfully conscious of their loss, are earnestly desirous for their recovery. In the Lord Jesus Christ all fulness of anointing dwells. "With him is the residue of the Spirit." He is prepared to impart more grace to those who have lost grace, or, who to their present state desire to add an increase. In the renewed quickening of the Spirit, the re-anointing is received. "Quicken thou me!" was the reiterated prayer of David. What! was he not already a quickened soul? Undoubtedly. Yet, feeling the need of a renewed quickening, he earnestly importunes for it: "Quicken me in thy truth, through thy judgments, by thy precepts: only quicken thou me,—for this my soul pants." And while the world was asking, "Who will show us *any* good?" the fervent breathing of this anointed priest of God was, "Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake," Psa. cxliii. 11. O seek this renewed quickening! New supplies of grace from Christ are implied in this fresh anointing. New grace—to subdue new cor-

ruptions, perpetually rising to the surface ; to meet new temptations, through the ever-shifting ways of the subtle enemy ; to overcome new difficulties, perpetually occurring in the path to heaven ; and to bear up under new trials, ever transpiring in a world of tribulation. The renewed joys and comforts of the Holy Spirit are also found in the fresh anointing. The joys which had evaporated, are replaced by others ; the peace which had been interrupted, flows back again ; consolations which had fled, are restored ; and confidence in God, which seemed shaken, is once more established in the soul.

In view of a blessing so needed and so precious, is it necessary that, in closing this chapter, we exhort the spiritual reader that he set himself earnestly, believingly, expectingly, to be re-anointed with fresh oil ? And yet there are some who need to be stirred up to this their great privilege. To them we would say,—Be not content with the old anointing. It is essential to a more holy and happy life, it is essential to a peaceful and cloudless death, that you seek to be anointed with *fresh* oil. Be not satisfied with past experiences. You

may at one time have possessed the clear witness of the Spirit; you may have enjoyed the love of God in your heart; you may have lived so near to Christ, as to have found "Wisdom's ways, ways of pleasantness, and her paths, paths of peace:" but the old anointing ceases to afford you now the high delight which you once experienced. Seek, then, the *fresh* anointing of the Spirit. Seek to have a *new* revelation of Christ to your soul. Seek the *renewed* application of his precious blood to your conscience. O seek the *fresh* oil! There is a fresh supply in Christ; a fresh supply in the Spirit; a fresh supply in the heart of God; a fresh supply in the covenant of grace. Jesus is prepared to pour it upon your soul *more abundantly*. The Holy Spirit is prepared to lead you to the source where this costly treasure dwells. A vessel of clay though you are—your capacity small, your unworthiness great—yet is the Triune God ready to recognise your exalted dignity and rank as a king and a priest, by shedding more copiously than ever the oil of gladness upon your head. Let *aged Christians*, especially, look to the state of their souls, and seek this renewed anointing. In

nearing the end of their journey, in looking into their graves, and beyond them, to the meeting with their God and Saviour, they will need to be anointed with *fresh* oil. One drop—O how will it insinuate itself through the whole inner life, diffusing energy and might!—the soul thus renewing its strength, and composing its ruffled pinions for its heavenly flight. Come, pilgrim of many a weary stage! come, soldier of many a hard-fought battle! come, voyager of many a storm and tempest, and sit down at the Saviour's feet, and receive of the fresh oil! Come, gather up the trailing garments, shake off the gathered dust from your sandals, wipe the sweat from your brow, and rest awhile upon the bosom of your Lord, while with fresh oil he anoints you for your burial. Is it not time for you to give up this poor world's pursuit, and lay aside, in some measure, its needless anxiety and care, and allow a holy pause, a solemn calm, to intervene—ere you unclasp your helmet, lay down your staff, and are gathered to your fathers?

As ministers of Christ, as stewards of the great mysteries of the gospel, let us not be satisfied without this renewed anointing. We stand

perpetually in need, beloved, of the *FRESH oil*. The power we are incessantly exhausting, the grace we are constantly using, the multiform duties, the numerous labours in which we are continually engaging, demand that we keep our eye intently fixed upon the state of our own anointing. The past application of the holy oil will not meet our present exigencies. We need an ever-overshadowing, ever-teaching, ever-anointing Spirit. Going to our work relying upon former communications of grace, upon old stores of knowledge—the *present* teaching and anointing of the Holy Ghost unsought—that work must of necessity be performed in a cold and insipid, in a perfunctory and powerless manner, to the great detriment of the truths we preach, of the souls we instruct, and of the Master we serve. In the absence of the *fresh* anointing, we shall be tempted, either to substitute old performances for new, or else to serve the sanctuary with unbeaten oil. In order to come before our people with new treasures, or to exhibit truths, already known and familiar, with such unction and vigour as will impart to their presentation all the freshness and power of newly-discovered revelations, we must be

anointed with *fresh* oil. Why is it that we sow so much, and reap so little? why, after our studious preparation, and exhausting toil, there is so little real power in our preaching, and from that preaching so little immediate result? why is it that our words, instead of burning upon our lips, and thrown like glowing embers into the bosoms of our hearers, enkindling holy fires, alas! do but drop like icicles, congealing ere they reach a solitary heart? Is it not, verily, because we lack the *fresh* oil? Necessary as is education,—valuable as is learning,—useful auxiliaries as are all the treasures we can draw from science,—enriching as is intellect,—and entrancing as is eloquence, these alone constitute not the *able minister of the New Testament*. Other and far more important requisites are needed to compose and perfect this high and holy character. Without the anointing of the Holy Ghost, what spiritually enlightening, sanctifying, saving power has the most erudite, and eloquent, and convincing ministry? None whatever. O how greatly we overlook this! Why is it deemed almost a crime to declare fully and broadly the distinguishing doctrines of grace? Why is it

that the preaching of other days—the clear, bold enunciation of the great fundamental truths of the gospel,—would be sufficient to peril the popularity of almost any minister in some of the high places of the Christian Church? The answer is,—the formation of a distaste for such preaching, by a ministry, in many instances, possessing much intellectual power, but lacking the power of the Holy Ghost. It is to be feared that much of the ministry of the day is creating a taste and forming a character sadly opposed to preaching thoroughly evangelical, deeply spiritual, and possessing, in a large degree, the anointing of the Spirit of God. We do not hesitate to affirm of the generality of the preaching of our times, that it is too intellectual and recondite. Men are aiming to throw off magnificent sermons, the result of mental toil the most exhausting. Hence the constant rotation in the Christian ministry, the perpetual change in the pastoral relation. It is utterly impossible that any physical or mental constitution, the most robust, can long endure such close study, such severe thinking, such incessant application, such overtasked powers, without either an utter prostration, or else seeking

repose in another and a new sphere of labour, where old material is made to supply the place of fresh. That there are some holy and honourable exceptions to this statement, both within and without the Establishment, we rejoice to believe—men of God who preach not themselves, but with beautiful simplicity, and holy fervour, and fresh anointing, preach Jesus in all his personal glories, and in all the fulness and perfection of his atoning work—men who do not shun to declare the whole counsel of God;—upon them we depend as the conservators of the truth, and to them we look as the spiritual regenerators of the prevailing style of pulpit labour.

We would venture upon one more exhortation. Remember your priesthood—it comes through a royal line, and it proceeds from the Anointed One. Let the thought be ever present with you, “I am a king—I am a priest—I bear about me the anointing of the Lord!” The abiding, solemn reflection, the awful consciousness of the fact, will arm you against those influences which tend to wither the life of your soul. You will especially watch and pray against whatever is known to be injurious to

your anointing, to produce a dryness and deadness in your spirit. See well to the character of your reading. Avoid the writings that absorb the sweet, holy oil. Can you peruse a chapter of a novel, or a light romance, or a tale of fiction, and not be conscious of violence, in some measure, done to this Divine anointing? Impossible! Beware, then, of the drying, absorbing tendency and effects of worldly literature. Guard, too, against the influence of worldly associations—the deadening, carnalising influence of the society of the ungodly. We bid you not separate yourself entirely from them, for this were to go out of the world. The gospel of Jesus is not reclusive nor selfish. The religion of Christ is not the religion of convents, and monasteries, and hermit's cells. It bids, and it constrains a Christian to love the souls of men, to live for the world's good, to labour for the world's blessing, to purify it with his grace, and to illumine it with his Christianity. But, we beseech you, avoid its intimacies, its friendships, its alliances, and a needless exposure to its society, if you would keep fresh upon your soul the sweet holy oil. If, then, upon an honest examination of the circle in

which you move, of the profession you have assumed, of the business you pursue, of the pleasures you indulge, of the connections you are forming, of the friendships you are cultivating, you discover that which is injurious to the life of God in your soul, which despoils you of the fragrance of your grace, which impairs your moral power, and lessens your usefulness in the church and in the world,—beneath the cross, and under the renewed anointing of the Holy Ghost, yield it at once and for ever. Surrendering it heartily, solemnly, for Christ's sake, you shall suffer no loss but the loss of that which robbed you of the costliest, sweetest, holiest blessing this side the sunny land of heaven. Loss ! O no ! You shall be a rich gainer. He in whose name you did it—whose love constrained you, whose grace strengthened you, whose glory guided you, whose eye watched you, whose smile beamed upon you, and whose ministering spirits, invisibly but closely, clustered around you, will pour a tide of blessing so rich into your soul, as shall compel you, in wondering, adoring gratitude and praise to exclaim—"THOU ANOINTEST MY HEAD WITH OIL ; MY CUP RUNNETH OVER."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE INFLUENCE OF SANCTIFIED TRIAL UPON THE INNER LIFE.

" Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me."
PSALM cxxxviii. 7.

PARTIAL and imperfect as the present endeavour to lay before the Christian Church some views of spiritual life must be considered, a more marked deficiency, and one of still greater moment, would exist, were we to allow an occasional allusion only to a period in the believer's history, which, of all others, has frequently proved most favourable to the matured advancement of the indwelling life—the *period of sanctified trial*. It would not be difficult, were the correctness of the fact disputed, to summon a cloud of witnesses to testify, that seasons of trouble have invariably proved, in the experience of the spiritual mind, seasons of

soul-quickenings; that times of Divine chastening have ever been times of heart-recovery; and that, consequently, we may regard the hour of affliction as bearing upon its sombre wings, concealed indeed beneath their dark plumage, some of the golden blessings of the Christian life. The raven carrying food to the languid prophet, and the lion yielding honey to the mighty Samson, are symbols of the mode which God sometimes adopts of transmitting nourishment and reviving to the inner life of his people. Truly in their case it may be said—and the enigma admits of easy solution—“ Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.”

We have been studying in the preceding pages several illustrations of spiritual life, gleaned from the experience of David. Deeply instructive as each must have been, we cannot regard them as surpassed in tender, touching, and holy interest, by that one upon which we now propose to fix the attention of the spiritual reader,—David in deep trouble, yet assured of Divine reviving: “ Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me.” And

yet how difficult it often is to win an assent to the truth taught in these words; to bring the sentiment they contain to a practical bearing upon the judgment and feelings of the tried Christian, while yet in the midst of the furnace! How hard, especially under the first stunning effects of his affliction, to reason him into the belief that those very circumstances which are now weaving their web of difficulty around his path, may yet possess a power and a buoyancy so great, as to lift his soul from the region of coldness, despondency, and gloom, into that of life, light, and joy. Nor should this slowness to admit a statement so apparently contradictory surprise us. Affliction wears neither a pleasant nor a promising aspect. Frowning and foreboding, there is at first view something before which the stoutest heart quails, and from which the sternest spirit shrinks—whose tincture of wormwood and gall the lips would fain allow to pass, untasted and untouched. And although that darkening cloud embosoms a heaven-sent message, and although that rod, dotted with buds and blossoms, is prepared to burst into fruit and beauty, and

although the “ Man of sorrows ” left the perfume of his own lips lingering upon the brim of that cup, we would yet willingly forego the experience of the blessing which it conveys, to escape the present pain of the discipline which it enjoins. But let us turn our attention to the deeply instructive and precious truth before us—the relation which sanctified trial has to the reviving of the inner life of the soul.

Contemplate the Psalmist's circumstances : “ Walking in the midst of trouble.” It was no new and untrodden path along which he was pursuing his way to God. The footprint—sometimes stained with blood, always moistened with tears—of many a suffering pilgrim might be descried in that way, from the time that Abel, the primeval martyr, laid the first bleeding brow that ever reposed upon the bosom of Jesus. And yet how often does trial overtake the believer, as ‘ though some strange thing had happened to him ! ’ That at the peculiar nature of an affliction a Christian man should be startled and alarmed, would create no surprise ; but that he should be startled at the trial itself, as if he alone—the only one of the family—were exempted from the discipline of the cove-

nant, and had no interest in the Saviour's declaration,—“ In the world ye shall have tribulation ”—might well astonish us.

But David's experience is that of many of the spiritual seed of David. His words seem to imply continuous trial: “ I *walk* in the midst of trouble.” With how many travellers to the celestial city it is thus ! They seem never to be without trial. They know no cessation, they obtain no repose, they experience no rest. The foam of one mountain billow has scarcely broken and died upon the shore, ere another follows in its wake: “ Deep calleth unto deep.” Is it the trial of sickness?—the darkened chamber, scarcely ever illumined with one cheering ray of light—the bed of suffering, seldom offering one moment's real repose—the couch of weariness, rarely quitted, are vivid pictures of trial, drawn from real life, needing no colouring of the fancy to heighten or exaggerate. Is it domestic trial?—what scenes of incessant chafings, and anxieties, and turmoils, and sources of bitterness, do some families present; trouble seems never to absent itself from the little circle. Yes, it is through a series of trials that many of Christ's followers

are called to travel. The loss of earthly substance may be followed by the decay of health, and this succeeded, perhaps, by that which, of all afflictions, the most deeply pierces and lacerates the heart, and for a season covers every scene with the dark pall of woe—the desolation of *death*. Thus the believer ever journeys along a path paved with sorrow, and hemmed in by trial. Well, be it so! We do not speak of it complainingly. God forbid! We arraign not the wisdom, nor doubt the mercy, nor impeach the truth of Him who has drawn every line of that path, who has paved every step of that way, and who knows its history from the end to the beginning. Why should our heart fret against the Lord? Why should we weary at the way? It is the ordained way—it is the right way—it is the Lord's way; and it is the way to a city of habitation, where the soul and body—the companions of the weary pilgrimage—will together sweetly and eternally rest. Then all trouble ceases—then all conflict terminates. Emerging from the gloom and labyrinth of the wilderness, the released spirit finds itself at home, the inhabitant of a world of which it is said,—“God shall wipe away all

tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

But the *spiritual* troubles which encompass the Christian walk are the deepest and the severest of all his trials. What in comparison are others? Our Lord keenly felt this when he uttered that affecting exclamation: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Shall I say, Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour." What to him—galling and agonising as they were—what to him the smiting, and the scourging, and the spitting, and the excruciating torture, compared with the sword which was now entering his soul—the mental conflict and spiritual sorrow which, in the hour of atonement, amazed, staggered, and overwhelmed him? Listen again to his affecting cry: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Then, withdrawing himself from his disciples—for the human sympathy upon which he had relied in anticipation of the hour of suffering failed him now—retiring from man, he flung himself upon the bosom of God, and kneeling down,

he prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" Such, my soul, was the conflict which thy Saviour endured for thee!

Partakers of Christ's sufferings, all true believers are in a measure acquainted with some of those soul troubles which thus overwhelmed the Son of God. The suspensions of Divine consolation—the hidings of God's countenance—the assaults of Satan—the contact and conflict with sin—are bitter ingredients in that cup of spiritual sorrow of which they are sometimes called deeply to drink. But the subject more immediately before us is, the influence of all sanctified trial upon the life of God in the soul: "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me."

That there was a consciousness in David's mind of spiritual relapse is clearly evident. It would appear that in the process of trial through which he was now passing, the discovery of this relapse was made. O what a detector of the secret state of our souls does the season of trial often prove! We are not aware of our impaired strength, of our weak faith, of our powerless grace;—how feeble our

hold on Christ is; how legal our views of the gospel are; how beclouded our minds may be; how partial our acquaintance with God is,—until we are led into the path of trouble. The season of prosperity veils the real state of our souls from our view. No Christian can form an accurate estimate of his spiritual condition who has not been brought into a state of trial. We faint in the day of adversity, because we then find—what, perhaps, was not even suspected in the day of prosperity,—that our strength is small.

But seasons of trial are emphatically what the word expresses—they *try* the work in the souls of the righteous. The inner life derives immense advantage from them. The deeper discovery that is then made of the evil of the heart is not the least important result: “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.” What folly still dwells in the hearts of the wise—bound up and half concealed—who can tell? Who would have suspected such developments in the life of Abraham, of David, of Solomon, of Peter? And so is it with all who yet are the possessors of that wisdom

which will guide their souls to eternal glory. Folly is bound up in their hearts; but the sanctified rod of correction reveals it, and the discovery proves one of the costliest blessings in the experience of the disciplined child. Listen to the language of Moses, addressed to the children of Israel,—“Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no.” And O what a discovery that forty years’ marching and counter-marching in the wilderness was to them of the pride, and impatience, and unbelief, and ingratitude, and distrust, that were bound up in their heart! And yet, though all this evil was deep-seated in their nature, they knew it not, and suspected it not, until trial brought it to the surface. Thus, beloved, is it with us. The latent evil is brought to light. God leaves us to try what is in our heart, and this may be the first step in the reviving of his gracious work in our souls. O let us not, then, shrink from the probing, nor startle at its discovery,

if it but lead us nearer to holiness, nearer to Christ, nearer to God, nearer to heaven !

The time of trouble is often, too, a time of *remembrance*, and so becomes a time of reviving. Past backslidings,—unthought of, unsuspected, and unconfessed,—are recalled to memory, in the season that God is dealing with us. David had forgotten his transgression, and the brethren of Joseph their sin, until trouble summoned it back to memory. Times of trial are searching times, remembering times. Then it is we turn in upon ourselves, and “bethink ourselves in the land whither we are carried captive ;” and then with David we exclaim, “*I thought* on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.” And thus it is that the Lord revives us in trouble.

By bringing us into a closer acquaintance with the word, trial stimulates the inner life. We flee to the word for counsel or for comfort, and the word proves a quickening word. Divine correction not only teaches, but it stimulates our relish for the spiritual parts of God’s truth. In times of prosperity we are tempted

to neglect the word. The world abates the keenness of the soul's appetite. We taste no sweetness in its promises, and cannot receive its admonitions and rebukes. "The full soul loatheth a honeycomb, but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." Replenished with created good, and surfeited with earthly comfort, the soul, in its pride and self-sufficiency, loathes the Divine honey of God's word. But when the Lord removes the creature, and embitters the world—both proving cisterns that can hold no water—then how precious becomes the word of Jesus!—not its doctrines and its consolations only, but even its deepest searchings and its severest rebukes—that which lays us the lowest in the dust of shame and self-aborrence—are then sweet as the honey and the honeycomb to our renewed taste. Then in truth we exclaim—"How sweet are thy words to my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

And from whence flows our true *comfort* in the hour of deep heart-sorrow? David, in his trouble, shall answer: "This is my comfort in my affliction—for *thy word hath quickened me.*" O how many a deeply-tried Christian

has set his seal to this truth! What is the comfort sought by the worldling in *his* affliction? Alas! he seeks to drown his sorrow by plunging yet deeper into that which has created it. He goes to the world for his comfort—that world that has already belied him, betrayed him, and stung and wounded him more keenly and deeply than the adder. The creature is his idol, money is his god, and pleasure his only resource. But turn to the man of God. What was the Psalmist's comfort in his sorrow? Was it the lightness of his affliction? was it the love of Jonathan? was it the soothing tenderness and sympathy of the saints? Ah no!—it was none of these. It was the *spiritual quickening* his soul received through the truth of God! This healed his sorrow-stricken heart; this poured a tide of richer comfort into his deeply afflicted soul than the sweetest human balm, or even the entire removal of his trial, could have done. O favoured soul, who, when in deep and dark waters—when passing through the fiery furnace—art led to desire *spiritual quickening* above all other comforts beside—sweetly testifying, “*This* is my comfort in my affliction,

thy word hath *quicken*ed me." That word, unfolding to us Jesus, leading us to Jesus, and transforming us into the image of Jesus, proves a reviving word in the hour of trial: "I should have perished in my affliction, unless thy law had been my delight."

The grace that is brought into exercise in the particular season of affliction, must necessarily tend greatly to promote the revival of the inner life. In a time of prosperity, grace is apt from desuetude to become feeble and torpid. And yet, were the believer but keenly alive to the perils of his path, he would feel as deeply the necessity of especial grace to hold him up in the smooth as in the rough way. "Hold thou me up in *thy paths*," was a prayer replete with holy, heavenly wisdom. Thus walking in the very ways of God, the believer requires the sustaining power of God. And yet how sadly does grace often decay, and the inner life go back, in the time when all things smile, and the path is smooth. A spiritual paralysis seems to steal over the whole moral man. But blessed is he who, learning this truth, in the midst of his most active and spiritual and holy duties, —when laying himself out the most for God,

and treading with all uprightness in the Lord's path,—is led to distrust his own wisdom, strength and truthfulness, and breathe the prayer, "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not."

And yet how liable is grace to decay, and the inner life to lose ground, when all things smile upon a path smooth and unruffled! But God sends affliction, and the grace that lay concealed is brought to view, and the grace that remained dormant is summoned to arms; the whole soul is awakened, energized and inspired as with new life. "The trial of faith worketh patience." Thus one tried grace stirs up another grace, until all the links in the golden chain feel the electric influence and are set in motion. O blessed trouble, that so stirs up the life of God in the soul as to make each grace of the Spirit a "*new* sharp threshing instrument having teeth;" a weapon re-cast, and newly furbished in the furnace, and so coming forth with keener edge and more polished blade, to "fight the good fight of faith," with mightier power and success.

But the influence of sanctified affliction upon the inner life is, perhaps, the most evident and

powerful *in the revival of the spirit of prayer*. Truly, in reference to this happy result, may the believer exclaim, “ Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me.” Nothing more effectually quickens us to communion with God than the trial that flows from his love, and is sanctified by his Spirit. Strange that to this, the highest, holiest, and sweetest privilege prepared for the Christian, he is often the most indifferent, and in its observance his feelings are the most chilled and sluggish. What an evidence—one more melancholy there cannot be—of the moral deadness of the soul by nature, that even after it is quickened with a life that brings it into union with the life of God,—after the Spirit of God has entered and made his abode there, ever dwelling and reigning and working in it, there should still remain so much deadness to that which is spiritual, especially the most spiritual of all duties and the most precious of all privileges—communion with God!

But in the time of trouble we stir ourselves up to calling upon God; we awake to the conviction—perhaps it is as new and as novel as though it were for the first time felt—we

awake to the conviction that we are in possession of a mighty instrument, which when exerted brings all heaven, and the God of heaven, into our soul. We start as from a dream ; and just at the identical moment when all creature assistance droops, and all earthly resources fail, and leave us like a dismantled wreck drifting upon the billows, we discover that we are furnished with a power of relief mightier than the mightiest angel's,—a power which, when exerted, (we speak it with reverence,) overcomes, like the wrestling patriarch, Omnipotence itself—the power of PRAYER ! And what is prayer but God's power in the soul of a poor, feeble worm of the dust, over Himself ? It was no human might of Abraham which enabled him to wrestle with, and prevail with, the Angel of the covenant : it was the power of the Holy Ghost in his soul ; and when the Divine Angel yielded, he yielded but to himself, and so God had all the glory—and shall have, of all that he has wrought for us, and of all that we have wrought by him, through eternity.

It is in the time of trouble, then, that we learn to pray with new power. We become more thoroughly acquainted with the Divine

nature and the omnipotent energy of prayer. We learn what our resources, as the true sons of Israel, are. Many are then led to pray, who never prayed before. "Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them," Isa. xxvi. 16. Then it is the proud spirit yields; the knee that never bent before, bends now, and the terrified soul cries out unto Him whose chastening is upon it. The slumbering Christian, too, is awakened to call upon God. Then it is he finds at what a distance he had been living from God. Then he discovers his true position—the real state of his soul, touching prayer. Thus aroused, like the slumbering prophet, by a voice and startled by a rebuke issuing from a quarter he would least have suspected—"What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise and call upon thy God!"—he awakes, and finds himself in a storm threatening instant destruction. To what does he then betake himself? David shall answer: "I give myself unto prayer," Psa. cix. 4. And oh, how eloquent is then the voice of the wrestling believer! Never did the fugitive prophet "pray unto the Lord his God" as when walking

in the midst of trouble. "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple," Jonah ii. 1, 2, 7. In this way the Lord revives the spirit of prayer within us. And oh, what words can describe the blessedness of prayer in trial!—the preciousness of the privilege of having a God to go to, a Father to flee to in trouble! To bring you more deeply and personally into the experience of this, dear tried Christian, the Lord thy God is dealing with you now. Oh, beloved, betake yourself unto prayer! Thou shalt indeed find it the outlet of all sorrow, and the inlet of all joy. Welcome the trouble that thus revives you. Receive with meekness of spirit, yea with gladness of heart, the discipline, however humbling, that throws you upon God—yea, that severs you from all creatures, and that shuts you up to Him alone. That discipline, painful as it is, springs from love. In love that trouble is sent, in love that cross is permitted, in love that cup is given, in love that

rod is used,—it is to set you upon the work of *prayer*. What are these frowns of thy Father, what these hidings of thy Saviour, what these withholdings of the Spirit, but to allure you within the holiest, there to find the throne of grace? “I will go,” says the Lord, “and return to my place till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early,” Hos. v. 15. And what, too, the chastening beneath which your tender, sensitive spirit is now smarting, but to bring you into Ephraim’s state of revived prayer,—“I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God,” Jer. xxxi. 18. Then, beloved, “despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him,” for he only seeks to draw you closer within his bosom. Give your troubled spirit unto prayer. Yield it to the reposing, soothing influence, of communion with God. Withhold not from thy bleeding wound this healing balsam, rob not thy sick heart of this precious panacea. Give

yourself unto prayer. You hold in your hands a power which God cannot resist. Approaching him in the name of Jesus, you may embosom your tried and weary spirit in the very heart of Jehovah. Take the praying saints of old for your example and encouragement,—“Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the Lord, and he answered them. He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar,” Psa. xcix. 6, 7. The Lord who “maketh the clouds his chariots,” is prepared to speak to you in love from *your* ‘cloudy pillar.’

“ O wondrous power of faithful prayer !
What tongue can tell the Almighty grace ?
God’s hands or bound or open are,
As Moses or Elijah prays;
Let Moses in the Spirit groan,
And God cries out—‘ Let me alone!

“ ‘ Let me alone, that all my wrath
May rise the wicked to consume!
While justice hears thy praying faith,
It cannot seal the sinner’s doom:
My Son is in my servant’s prayer,
And Jesus forces me to spare.’ ”

Are you, beloved, walking in the midst of trouble? Think not that you are alone. May

your eye of faith be “anointed with fresh eye-salve,” to see One walking side by side with you, the same who walked with the three children through the fiery furnace: “whose form is like the Son of God.” Yes! Jesus is with you in your trial. Christ is with you in your trouble. The path, however straight, is not so narrow that your Lord cannot tread it with you, side by side. Your way is not so intricate that he cannot enable you to thread your steps through the labyrinth. There is room enough for you and Christ to walk together. He is with you: though like the two disciples journeying, in mournful communion one with the other, to Emmaus, your eyes may be holden that you see him not, yet is he journeying with you along that sad and mournful, that lone and pensive path. Christ is in your adversity—Christ is in your cross—Christ is in your crook—Christ is in your suffering—Christ is in your persecution—Christ is in your sickness—yea, Christ is at your side every step you take, and he will conduct you safely to your Father’s house. Though you walk in the midst of trouble, he will *revive* you.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IN ITS RELATION TO THE INNER LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN.

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection."
PHIL. iii. 10.

THE real value of any truth to a child of God is the conscious power of that truth in his own soul. The Bible is designed to be an experimental and a practical book. It deals not in abstract truth, in mere theoretical teaching, but in revelations intended by its Divine Author to address themselves to the judgment, thus finding an inlet to the conscience and the heart, and becoming a leaven of holiness in the soul, diffusing its influence through the entire moral and intellectual man. We repeat the observation, that any one truth is valuable to the Christian in proportion to his personal and experimental acquaintance with its nature and effects. And here it is impossible to resist the solemn remark,—how far an individual may go in an intellectual subscription to, and a theoretical

reception of, vital and essential truth, and yet be utterly ignorant of its renewing and sanctifying power in his soul !

It is another characteristic of the true believer in Jesus, that he places no limit to his knowledge and experience of Divine truth. Take the apostle, whose words are now under consideration, for an example of this. Did he not already know something of Christ ? Assuredly ! And yet he panted to know more : “ That I may know him.” Had he not already felt in his soul—and in no mean degree, too—the power of the Lord’s resurrection ? Undoubtedly ! And yet behold how he desires to know more : “ That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.” Thus placing no bound to the extent of his knowledge of Christ, and his experience of the truth, but defining for himself a scope worthy the objects of his study, and placing his eager and fixed gaze upon the loftiest standard of Christian attainment, he forgot the things that were behind, and pressed forward to those things which were before, never regarding himself as having attained, so long as the goal was yet unreached, and the “ mark for the prize of the

high calling of God in Christ Jesus" was still before him. O that there were more of this Christianity in the Church of God! Everything in creation and providence is advancing to its given point of perfection; why should the believer alone be stationary?—why should he, possessing already the germ of a perfection so glorious, and destined to a development so great, be content with a dwarfish stature, rather than the "stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus?" O Lord, stir us up to greater advances in the Divine life!

The resurrection of Christ is a vital doctrine of Christianity. It sustains an essential relation to the spiritual life of the believer. Viewing it in connection with the union of Christ and his people, the two facts become identical—standing in the relation of cause and effect. Our Lord, in his great atoning work, acted in a public, or representative character. He represented in his person the whole elect of God, who virtually were in him each step that he took in working out their redemption. In his resurrection from the grave this was pre-eminently so. The Head could not be resuscitated apart from the Body. Christ could not

rise without the Church. To have left the Church, which he represented, and in whose place and behalf he acted, still in the grave, would have been, to say nothing of the impossibility of such a thing, her eternal destruction. Thus, then, the new, or the resurrection life of Christ, and the inner, or spiritual life of the believer, are one and indivisible. Now, when the resurrection of the Head is spiritually realised, when it is fully received into the heart by faith, it becomes a quickening, energizing, sanctifying truth to each member of his body. It transmits a power to the inmost soul, felt in all the actings and manifestations of the spiritual life: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection." Blessed are they who feel, and who feel daily, that they are indeed "risen with Christ," and who find every new perception of this great truth to act like a mighty lever to their souls—lifting them above this "present evil world"—a world *passing away*. I propose in the present chapter to adduce a few observations upon the authenticity of this great doctrine, and then proceed to illustrate its relation to the inner life of the believer.

How truly has the "Stone which the builders rejected become the head stone of the corner!" The single doctrine upon the truth of which Christianity rests, and which, for the same reason, is, of all the truths of the Bible, the most impugned and rejected by the unbeliever, is the doctrine of Christ's resurrection. Both the Jew and the infidel have sagacity enough to perceive that, if this fact be proved, all is proved that appertains to Christianity. The great question of the divinity of our holy religion is at once and for ever set at rest. Christ is then declared to be the true Messiah, and Christianity the true religion. But come we to the argument. Quietly and reverently his disciples composed his mangled limbs, and laid them to rest in the new-made sepulchre. Up to this touching and eventful moment the chain of evidence had been powerful and complete. Event had succeeded event, and miracle had followed miracle—each one fulfilling some new prediction, and supplying some still more convincing demonstration of his Messiahship. But suppose that at this crisis the chain were broken! Suppose the last link were wanting to complete the mighty

proofs of his divinity! What if he had not come back again to life—death and the grave prolonging beyond the predicted moment their boasted victory? Who does not see that the whole case would have fallen to the ground—that the entire testimony would have been overthrown—that the great volume of prophecy would have proved a fiction—the hopes of past ages a dream—salvation a stupendous lie—redemption a splendid delusion—and Christ the prince of impostors? But eternal love and omnipotent power were pledged for the certain and glorious issue.

Were we disputing with an objector, we should probably pursue a line of argument somewhat like this:—The great question is, Was the tomb of Christ emptied or not? If it was, what became of its sacred deposit—the body of Jesus? The first and leading point is conceded by all—viz., that the grave was vacated. Then, what became of the body? Was it retained by the Jews? Then let them produce it, and the question is fairly and for ever set at rest, and decided in their favour. Was it true, as affirmed by his enemies, that his disciples, who but three days before clustered a feeble

weeping band around that tomb, had, in the quietude of night, and in the face of a Roman guard, armed to the teeth, and wakeful to every breath, sacrilegiously invaded its sanctity, and robbed it of its precious treasure? Still the act would not have aided their cause, while it must have furthered the design of the Jews. But mark the perfect agreement of the witnesses who testified that he was risen from the dead. Five hundred of them declare and affirm that Christ was alive. They were all examined, and cross-examined apart, and still nothing could shake their testimony that he was alive. And *where* did they publish the fact? Did they travel to some remote place, where the evidence could not be sifted, and where they might succeed in palming their story upon the ignorance and credulity of strangers? No! but in Jerusalem—in the synagogues—upon the very spot where he had asserted his Messiahship, foretold his death, and predicted his resurrection, they affirmed that he was alive. And *when* did they publish the doctrine? Did they wait until the epoch of his resurrection had passed, and the circumstance of its novelty and interest had subsided?

Nay; but from the moment that the celestial sentinels, who still lingered within the tomb, announced that he was not there, but was risen—pointing to the vacant spot where he had lain, as an affirmation of the truth—they went forth and published the fact; and while the whole city was in a tempest of excitement, and the eyes of his enemies were still sparkling with rage, and the storm that had laid low the Saviour threatened to crush his followers, they fearlessly and boldly affirmed everywhere that Jesus was alive. Is it likely, we ask, that these men, timid and unlearned as they were, and confronted, too, with the sternest tribunal of the world, could have invented such an imposture, or if so, could have succeeded in winning such multitudes over to its belief? We think it impossible.

The circumstances of the Saviour's resurrection were in harmony with its lonely and solemn grandeur. No human witness was privileged to behold it. The mysterious re-union of the human soul with the body of Christ was an illustrious event, upon which no mortal eye was permitted to gaze. There is a moral grandeur of surpassing character in the resurrection of

Christ unseen. The fact is not an object with which sense has to do so much as faith. And that no human eye was permitted to witness the stupendous event, doubtless was designed to teach man that it was with the spiritual and not with the fleshly apprehension of this truth that he had especially to do. What eye but that of faith could see the illustrious Conqueror come forth, binding, with adamantine chains, hell, death, and the grave? What principle but the spiritual and mighty principle of faith could enter into the revealed mind of God, sympathise with the design of the Saviour, and interpret the sublime mystery of this stupendous event? It was proper, therefore, nay it was worthy of God and in harmony with the character and the design of the resurrection of our Lord, that a vail should conceal its actual accomplishment from the eye of his Church, and that the great evidence they should have of the truth of the fact should be, *the power of his resurrection felt and experienced in their souls*. O yes! the only power of the Saviour's resurrection which we desire to know is that which comes to us through the energy of an all-seeing, all-conquering, all-believing faith. O give me this, rather

than to have witnessed with these eyes the celestial attendants clustering around the tomb—the rolling away of the stone that was upon the sepulchre—the breaking of the seal—and the emerging form of the Son of God, bearing in his hands the emblems and the tokens of his victory. The spiritual so infinitely transcends the carnal—the eye of faith is so much more glorious than the eye of sense, that our Lord himself has sanctified and sealed it with his own precious blessing—“Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed: *blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*” Blessed Jesus! in faith would I then follow thee each step of thy journey through this vale of tears—in faith would I visit the manger, the cross, and the tomb,—for thou hast pronounced him blessed above all, who, though he sees not, yet believes in thee. Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.”

Perhaps no circumstance connected with the resurrection of Christ conveys to the mind a clearer idea of its bearings upon the happiness of the Church than the part which the Divine Father is represented as having taken in the

illustrious event. His having committed himself to the fact, at once stamps it with all its saving interest. Thus is it ascribed to him—"Whom God hath raised"—"Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father"—"If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead." By this act of raising up his Son from the grave, the Father manifested his infinite delight in, and his full acceptance of, the sacrifice of Christ, as a finished and satisfactory expiation for the sins of his people. So long as Jesus remained in the grave, there was wanting the evidence of the acceptance of his death—the great seal of heaven, the signature of God, was needed to authenticate the fact. But when the Father released the Surety from the dominion of death, he annihilated, by that act, all legal claim against his Church, declaring the ransom accepted and the debt cancelled. "He was taken from prison,"—as the prisoner of justice,—and the prisoner of death,—and the prisoner of the grave: the Father, in the exercise of his glorious power, opens the prison door and delivers the illustrious captive,—and by that door through which he emerges again to life, enters the full justification of his whole Church

—for it is written : “ He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” Such is the doctrine, whose relation to the inner life is so essential, interesting, and influential, as to be worthy of our especial and deepest consideration.

A more important truth—where all are of infinite moment to the happiness of man—is not found in the word of God. As it forms the keystone to the mighty arch of Christianity—essential therefore to the stability and beauty of the whole fabric—so it constitutes the groundwork of spiritual life upon the basis of which the Holy Spirit of God quickens the souls of all who are the “called according to his purpose.” The relation of the Lord’s resurrection to the life of his people springs from the union which subsists between them. The Lord Jesus acted not, as we have just intimated, in his private or individual capacity, in any step which he took in the accomplishment of our salvation. He lived and laboured, died and rose again, as a public man, and standing in a federal relation to the Church. He needed not to obey for himself, for he was holy. He needed not to die for himself, for he had no sin to

atone. He needed not to rise from the dead for himself, for he was Essential Life. But when he lived and died, rose and revived again, he acted in behalf of, and in union with, a people who were one and indivisible with himself. Hence the influence of the great truth of Christ's resurrection upon the state of the inner life. It was a knowledge of this truth which awoke the ardent desire of the Apostle's soul, "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection."

Trace this power as it first appears in the *spiritual resurrection* of the child of God. The Apostle Paul, in behalf of the Ephesian saints, prays that, "the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." Thus the same resurrection power which brought back to life again the Head of the Church, is exerted in effecting the spiritual resurrection of the Church itself. The true believer is already risen. He was once dead in sin, and entombed in the grave of his iniquities. But a power—the same which awoke the death-slumber of Lazarus,

has darted from the tomb of Jesus, and has quickened him to a new and a deathless life. Oh, were we more directly to trace the mighty energy of the Eternal Spirit in our souls, raising us from the region of death to life and immortality, to that stupendous fact of redemption—the resurrection of Christ from the dead—how would it exalt our views of its importance, and fill our souls with its glory! What must be the power of our Lord's resurrection, that can even *now* awake the profoundest sleep of spiritual death! When the Spirit of God puts forth his own grace to raise a soul from the grave of sin, oh, forget not it is in virtue of a risen, living Saviour. Despair not of the spiritual life of any, though they may have laid in the grave so long as well nigh to have quenched all hope of their conversion, since Christ has risen from the dead, and is alive, to give life in answer to the prayer of faith: “The Second Adam is a *quickening* Spirit.”

The power which the resurrection of Christ possesses in opening up to view the doctrine of Divine reconciliation is great. The moment faith can look up to God through the medium of a risen Christ, all its views of his character

instantly become kind and soothing. How beautifully the Apostle associates the two blessings: "The God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus!" He is now truly the 'God of peace'—the pacified God, the reconciled Father; and the evidence of it is, his raising up his dear Son from the grave. Thus what a bright view does this truth unfold to us of God! When we retire within ourselves we see much to engender dark views of, and distrustful feelings towards, him. But when faith travels to the grave of Jesus, and we see it empty, we have such an overwhelming evidence of the perfect reconciliation of God, of his thoughts of peace towards us, that instantly faith triumphs, and all our gloomy, trembling apprehensions of his character vanish and disappear. He is the "God of peace," because Jesus is a risen Saviour. And in proportion as you lay hold by faith of the resurrection-life of Christ, you will have that pillar to sustain you upon which rests the whole fabric of salvation. The peace of God will fill your heart, as you know from experience the power of the Lord's resurrection in your soul. The power of Christ's resurrection, in

fact, lies in a sense of pardoned sin, in our apprehension of complete justification, in the living hope of eternal glory. Jesus saves to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, because he is a risen and a living Saviour, and ever liveth to make intercession in behalf of all his people. O deal believingly with a risen Christ !

But I wish to lay before the Christian reader an illustration of the practical power which this great and precious truth exerts in the healthy actings of the inner life. It quickens and strengthens the Divine life against the influence of worldly things. Of the earthward tendency of our hearts we are, alas ! but too conscious. We want an antagonistic principle, something to counteract the ever-working influence of an ungodly world. Where shall we meet with it ? We answer,—in the power of Christ's resurrection, felt, realised, and experienced in the soul. How beautifully and forcibly does the apostle place this truth before us : " If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." This is the argument of

Paul—"You are a risen people, risen in union with Christ. If this be so, then seek after heavenly-mindedness, setting your affections on things above." What a heaven-attracting power, then, has this glorious truth! What is Christ? he is alive. Where is Christ? he is in heaven, at the right hand of God, as my Head,—my Representative,—my Forerunner,—my Treasure,—my all. Then, let me rise! Shall not my affections soar to their best Beloved? Shall not my heart be where its treasure is? Shall I set my mind upon things on the earth, when my Lord rose out of the earth, and ascended above the earth, and bids me rise and follow him in faith, in spirit, and in love, until he calls me to come away to him entirely, that I might be ever with him, and behold his glory? If I am indeed risen with Christ, then let me evidence it by my increasing spiritual-mindedness. Christ, who is my life, is in heaven,—why should I needlessly be buried in the earth? Why allow—as I appear to do—that there is an object upon earth whose claims to my love are paramount, whose beauty to my eye is greater, whose attraction to my soul is stronger, than my risen, ascended, and glorified

Lord? Is there upon earth one who loves me as Jesus loves me? Is there one who has done for me what Jesus has done? Is there one who is doing for me now what Jesus is doing? Is there one who is to me such a friend, such a brother, such a counsellor, as Jesus? No, not one! Then, why should not my thoughts be more with him? Why should not my heart cling closer to him? Why this vagrancy of mind, this truancy of affection, this wandering of desire; why this forgetfulness, coldness, and cleaving to earth, when my Lord is risen, and I am professedly risen with him? O to feel more sensibly, more deeply, more constantly, the *power* of his resurrection! Lord! I detect my heart settling down on creature things—objects of sense and sin. My business is a snare—my domestic blessings are a snare—my friendships are a snare—my position is a snare—the too fond opinion which others entertain of me, is a snare—my grace, my gifts, my usefulness, through the corruption of my heart, are snares. Lord, place beneath my soul the mighty lever of thy resurrection, and lift me towards thyself! O let me feel the earth-severing, the heaven-attracting

power of thy resurrection-life ! Having been buried with thee by baptism into death, fain would I now rise with thee, like as thou wast raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, that I might walk with thee in newness of life, until I reach thee in the realms of glory.

But not only is this a quickening, it is also a most *comforting* truth ; and thus there is a power which is felt in the very consolation which it conveys. What a blessed declaration is that—"Where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God !" The words are inexpressibly sweet—" *sitting* at the right hand of God." Having finished his work, having made an end of sin, having brought in an everlasting righteousness, having risen from the grave, having ascended up on high, he has *sat down* at the right hand of God, reposing in the full satisfaction, glory, and expectancy of his redeeming work. And for what object is he there seated ? Why is he thus presented to the eye of faith ? That the Church of God might have visibly and constantly before its view—a *risen, living* Christ. O how constantly is the Lord teaching us that there is but one Being who can

meet our case, and but one Object on which our soul's affections ought to be supremely placed—even a risen Saviour. We have temptations various, trials the world knows nothing of, crosses of which those who know and love us the most, never suspect—for often the heart's acutest sorrow is the least discoverable upon the surface.

But here is our great mercy—Christ is alive. What if we are unknown, tried, tempted, and sad, we yet have a risen Saviour to go to; who, as Rutherford says, “sighs when I sigh, mourns when I mourn, and when I look up he rejoices.” How can I want for sympathy when I have a risen Christ? how can I feel alone and sad, when I have the society and the soothing of a living and an ever-present Jesus—a Jesus who loves me, who knows all my circumstances, all my feelings, and has his finger upon my every pulse—who sees all my tears, hears all my sighs, and records all my thoughts—who, go to him when I will, and with what I will, will never say to me nay, nor bid me depart unblest—who is risen, exalted, and is set down at the right hand of his Father and my Father, his God and my God, to administer to me all

the blessings of the everlasting covenant, and to mete out, as I need them, all the riches of his grace, and the supplies of his salvation? Why, then, should I despond at any circumstance, why despair at any emergency, or sink beneath any trial, when I have a risen—a living Christ to go to? “When we are enabled to look at things above, to set our affections upon them, remembering that Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, that he has blotted out sin and made an end of it; and when his precious blood is sprinkled on our hearts, we can then say with ardent desire, ‘Lord God, give me every grace, make me like thyself, make me conformed in body, soul, and spirit to thee, dead to the world and alive to thee, thirsting for thee and loving thee supremely, willing to do and suffer thy will, so that at last I may be able to finish my course with joy, and that which the Lord hath committed unto me.’ It is a sweet, and quiet, and happy posture of soul, to look at Christ sitting at the right hand of God,” and to know that he is there with the breastplate upon his heart, and with the ephod upon his shoulder, interceding every moment for each individual member of his body. O the amazing power of the

Lord's resurrection ! O the preciousness of the fruit that springs from it ! " Communion with our heavenly Father, near walking with God, a life of faith in Christ, living on high, living not only on Christ's fulness but on Christ himself ; not only on what he has, but on what he is, in his Godhead, in his humanity, in the tenderness of his heart as well as the fulness of his salvation ; living in the blessed anticipation of glory, and honour, and immortality ; rising in the morning and saying, This day, and every day, I would consecrate to my God,"—these are some of the fadeless flowers and precious fruits that grow around the grave of Jesus, when faith, listening to the voice that issues from the vacant sepulchre—" He is not here, but is risen"—looks up and beholds him alive, " seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high." Then, O then, it exclaims in a transport of joy, " Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee," thou risen, living, and glorious Redeemer !

" Thou art my all—to thee I flee ;

Take me, oh, take me to thy keeping !

Make me thy branch, thy husbandry ;

Be thine the seed-time, thine the reaping.

“ For what on earth but tells thy power?
And what but makes thy love its theme?
I read it in the vernal shower,
It cheers me in the summer beam:

“ It glows while memory lingers yet,
O'er hours a mother's love beguiled;
For ah! a mother may forget,
But thou wilt not forget thy child.

“ I had a friend—nor false his love,
But him on earth no more I see:
Oh, thou unchanging Friend above,
What is an earthly friend to thee?

“ Give me no bright behest of care,
No grovelling boon of envied sod;
No hopes that lead but to despair;—
Ease, honours, wealth, are not my God.

“ Nor aught in heaven; for, angels, say,
And saints escaped earth's guilt and sadness,
What makes your everlasting day?
What tunes your heart to joy and gladness?

“ Oh, there is nought in yon bright sky,
Worthy this worthless heart to own;
On earth there's nought; friends, creatures, fly;
I pant, my Lord, for thee alone.”

But a signal and glorious illustration of the power of our Lord's resurrection is yet to appear—the *first resurrection and glory of all the saints*. “ Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.”

All who in this and in other places are described as *sleeping*, are the saints of God : the ungodly *die*, but the righteous only *sleep*. This distinction the Holy Ghost observes. Now Jesus, in his resurrection, is the first-fruit of them that slept ; that is, in virtue and in consequence of his resurrection from the grave, all who sleep in him shall have a “ part in the first resurrection.” This period will distinguish the saints from the ungodly. It is distinctly affirmed by the inspired apostle, that “ the dead in Christ shall rise first,” while “ we who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.” Now to this prior, or, first resurrection, there are some pointed and remarkable allusions. Our Lord distinctly refers to it in the words, “ They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead,” Luke xx. 35. It was to this first resurrection the apostle Paul was anxious to arrive,—“ If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead,” Phil. iii. 11. To this, too, the saints and martyrs of the Old Testament looked as the crown of their sufferings, and the recompense of their reward.

“Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection,” Heb. xi. 35. And this is the resurrection—and the only one—which God has pronounced blessed. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years,” Rev. xx. 6. How important that we should give to the prophetic events with which the resurrection of the saints stands connected, and which, indeed, are but preparatory to the ushering in of that great event, our most profound and prayerful consideration and study!

There is so much scriptural clearness and power in the following excellent remarks of an unknown, but evidently a deeply taught and spiritual writer, that I am induced to quote them in connection with our present interesting and important subject.

“It is desirable for us to know, what are the peculiar glories and advantages of the first resurrection; and also at what time we may expect it to take place. It is to the first resurrection saints, that the promise is made of

reigning with Christ, and partaking with him of his millennial glory, Rev. xx. 6 ; and it shall be the privilege of those who are alive when the event happens, to be ‘ clothed upon,’ and not ‘ unclothed,’ 2 Cor. v. 4 ; that is, to be given glorified bodies, without having seen death and corruption ; and to escape those premillennial troubles, which, in the great day of the Lord, will come on the earth.

“ In 1 Thes. iv. 17, we read, that the living saints are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. This must be for some purpose. They would not be caught up to descend again immediately ; and accordingly, we find repeated promises of their being thus kept in safety from the destruction of the earth, as Noah from the flood, and Lot from Sodom.

“ At the close of the premillennial troubles, when, at the battle of Armageddon, our Lord descends, his feet stand upon the Mount of Olives, and he completes the destruction of his enemies,—‘ he brings his saints with him,’ including those who had been caught up alive previously. ‘ A man ’ had been their hiding-place from the wind, their covert from the tempest, Isa. xxxii. 2. From what portion of the

final troubles we know not, or how long they had been hid ; but we know that Noah and Lot escaped *entirely*. And St. Peter says that from these types it is manifest, that the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations (trials). Our Saviour refers to the same events, saying, ‘Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is *revealed*.’ For until the day Noah entered the ark, the world went on as usual ; and the ‘*same day* that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone,’ Luke xvii. 26. St. Paul also declares, people are to be saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ just before the sudden destruction or day of the Lord’s revealing, when his saints are taken. It is from this sudden destruction Christ teaches us to pray that we may escape, and that when these things shall come to pass, we may be able to stand before him, Luke xxi. 36. Habakkuk hoped to ‘rest in the day of trouble,’ iii. 16 ; and Zephaniah says, ‘It may be we shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger,’ ii. 3. In Isa. xxvi. 20, 21, we read, ‘Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee ; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.

For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.' The Prophets and Psalms abound with promises of this safety from trouble, which are only partially fulfilled if we take them metaphorically, since believers are more in trouble than other men; but will be literally fulfilled when the time arrives.

“Seeing, then, that a literal safety is promised during a time of trouble, such as ‘never was,’—and that things are prepared for those who escape, such as ‘could not have entered into the heart of man,’ had they not been revealed by the Spirit,—no wonder that St. John says, ‘Those who have this hope, purify themselves,’ 1 John iii. 2, 3. No wonder St. Peter says, ‘Seeing ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot,’ 2 Pet. iii. 14; for if not, we lose all the glory of the new heavens and the new earth. No wonder that the whole creation groans, waiting for the redemption of the body, and that the earnest expectation of the creature waits for this manifestation of the sons of God,

Rom. viii. 19. Then, when the merciful men are taken from the evil to come, Isa. lvii. 1, 2, and 'the godly men cease,' '*then* shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked,' Mal. iii. 18. For it is expressly said, that when one is taken, another is left—while the one who loves his Lord's appearing, and expects it, shall meet him in the air, (as naturally as an eagle is attracted by a body,) the other is left, because of unbelief, to go through the time of the desolation of the earth, Matt. xxiv. 40.

"We next consider when these things may be; and if it should appear only probable that they may be at hand, we shall find sufficient cause for watchfulness. Persons in general suppose that they will not take place till our Lord descends to the earth at the end of the troubles; and as many events must happen first, viz., the restoration of the Jews, the battle of Armageddon, &c., they have a snare in their hearts to put off daily expectation. But let those who desire to be partakers of a 'better resurrection,' observe, that the re-establishment of the Jews in Jerusalem, marks the time when the church will have been removed.

“ By comparing Matt. xxiv. with Luke xxi., we see that ‘ the tribulation ’ began with the dispersion of the tribe of Judah, and ends with it ; and that afterwards, ‘ *immediately after,* ’ are the signs in sun, moon, and stars ; or that period of trouble commences from which the Church is saved. This is the period mentioned by Daniel, as *the last end of the indignation* to the Jewish nation, and which they will have to go through, with the exception of that remnant ‘ according to the election of grace,’ which, having been converted to the faith of Jesus, will be raptured with the Church. This last end of indignation is the time of the final development and overthrow of antichrist, and does not begin till the ‘ times of the Gentiles ’* are over ; which times are commensurate with the treading down of Jerusalem. Thus, at the re-establishment of Judah, the Lord must have gathered his people out of all nations ; have made up the number of his elect ; and have

* “ There appears to be a double termination to ‘ the times of the Gentiles ; ’—first, that mentioned in Luke xxi. 24, when Judah is restored *before the troubles* ; and the second, at *the end of the troubles* ; when Gentile ascendancy will be abolished, and all Israel saved by the coming of their Deliverer. See Rom. xi. 25, where it is called, ‘ the fulness of the times of the Gentiles.’ ”

secured them from the judgments coming on the earth.

“ From hence we may perceive how very near that *appearing* of our Lord may be, which will either begin our blessedness or leave us to be partakers of the destruction which cometh upon the earth. The Jews are now in a remarkable state of excitement, and expecting an immediate restoration. Nothing seems to be more likely than their speedy re-establishment in their own land. If, then, their restoration be near, the Lord’s appearing to meet his saints must be near also.

“ The sign which the Papacy affords, is one of the most striking and conclusive. Its destruction takes place during the final troubles, and after the dispersion of the Jews is over ; for in Daniel we read, ‘ When he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.’

“ Turning to Rev. x. 7, we see written, that at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, and pouring out of the seventh vial, the mystery of God shall be finished. The seventh trumpet includes the seventh vial; and when this vial is poured out, we read, in chap. xvi. 17, ‘ There

came a great voice, saying, It is done.' Just before this vial it is written, 'Behold, I come as a thief.' The midnight cry is made, and then the great earthquake takes place, in which Babylon is destroyed by a sudden and unexpected destruction.

"Let us now observe, that at the French Revolution, when, the 1260 years being over, the seventh trumpet began to sound, the Papacy was, according to the prophecy, hated, and made desolate; or, as Daniel expresses it, the judgment sat, and they took away her dominion, *'to consume and to destroy unto the end.'*"*

"Her state, at the end, we find from Rev. xviii., to be one of exultation; for having risen again from depression, she cries, 'I sit a queen! and am *no* widow, and shall see *no* sorrow;' alluding to her late widowhood and sorrow, from which she now believes herself to be delivered. But what follows? Her sudden and eternal destruction! In one hour is she made desolate; with violence is she thrown down, and is never to be found again. Universal lamentation succeeds; all on earth lament over

* See Elliott's *Horæ Apocalypticæ*, vol. iii. 1100, &c."

her; for the Church, having been previously translated, praises God in heaven for the judgment, ‘ Much people in heaven said, Alleluia !’

“ We certainly have abundant evidence that Popery is now on the very brink of the destruction denounced ; but it is clear that this cannot take place before the restoration of the Jews and the rapture of the Church;—may we, then, lift up our heads, for our redemption draweth nigh !* ”

“ * The 14th Rev. affords such corroborative evidence, it must not be omitted. We have in this chapter the cry of three missionary angels in our own time, after the termination of the 1260 years. First an angel preaches the everlasting gospel (ver. 6); and never did prophecy meet with more complete fulfilment. It will be enough to state, that the Bible Society alone has circulated fifteen millions of Bibles; and ten millions have been circulated by foreign Bible Societies. Of these societies, there are now more than 7000; and of these, nearly 4000 are in Great Britain. The number of versions of the Holy Scriptures is 159.

“ The Tract Society has since its institution (at the time of the angel’s flight) circulated THREE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY MILLIONS of publications; and its works are published in eighty-eight different languages.

“ These two societies alone show in what manner the prophecy has been accomplished; and if we take the most superficial glance at the work of other missionary societies during this period, we shall find the evidence overwhelming.

“ The second angel declares the corruptions and impending fall

“ Let us also observe that the cry, ‘ Behold, the bridegroom cometh,’ has been long and universally raised. This is a most remarkable sign, and sufficiently convincing that midnight was come when it began. The cry has been raised before at different periods, but never so widely, or combined with those other signs for which we are commanded to watch. For now is the gospel preached as a witness in all lands.

of the Papacy; and the third angel warns men against worshipping the Beast, and receiving his mark. What do we see?—the people of the Lord everywhere obeying the voice, and coming out of the Papacy. In France, whole communities renouncing the faith of Rome; and at this moment 800 converts in Ireland, suffering persecution and starvation, rather than receive the mark of the Beast! Then immediately follows the blessedness of the raptured church. From *henceforth* will they be blessed, by having their glorified bodies, and receiving the reward of their works.

“ The destruction of the Papacy succeeds. This is symbolised by a harvest of the earth. In Jer. li. 33, where the type, or literal Babylon, is spoken of, we read, ‘ The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor, it is time to thresh her; yet a little while, *and the time of her harvest shall come.*’ And when the **DRIED**’ harvest of the anti-type (Rome) shall have been reaped, the vintage takes place, or that final battle of Armageddon, in which the Lord appears personally, and treads down his enemies.) Compare Rev. xiv. 18—20; xix. 11—21; Joel iii. 11—18; Isa. lxiii. 1—7; Zech. xiv. 3—6; 2 Thess. i. 7—11.) See Horæ Apocalypticæ, vol. iii. 1283, &c.”

Now is Jerusalem no longer despised, but 'sought out,' and the Lord's servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof,' Psa. cii. 13, 14. Now, many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased. Now, we see that word of St. Paul fulfilled to the very letter, 'A form of godliness, denying the power thereof,' which was to characterise the *last of the latter days*.

"Now, also, the prophetic dates clearly point to the present moment; and now is there universal peace, while wars and commotions are confessedly looked for, by those who discern the political signs of the times. These men see that a great crisis is at hand; they see that the world cannot go on in its present state, and they announce the coming storm! and does not the eye of faith perceive the same, with greater certainty and assurance? are the children of this world always to be wiser than the children of light? shall they wake, and the Church sleep? Oh, let not the day overtake us as a thief! let not the cry be unheeded, 'Behold, He cometh!' but let us prepare for His appearing.

"What will be the nature of that 'appearing,

we know not ; but it is distinct from our Lord's standing on the earth, at the end of the troubles. He has himself told us that we need not fear mistaking it, Matt. xxiv. 23, 26, 27. Whatever the appearance may be, it will be universally seen, and the saints will be immediately caught up. And remember, 'When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath *shut* the door,' it will be too late to prepare for this event—either you will be found ready or unready—either you will be taken, or left ; and the Lord hath said, if we will not watch, we shall not know the hour when the Son of man comes upon us, Rev. iii. 3. But if we keep the word of his patience, he will keep us 'from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth,' Rev. iii. 10."*

In view of such glorious predictions—living in times so momentous—encircled by events so spirit-stirring—by signs so significant—and in the anticipation of a glory so resplendent and of a rapture so great, who would not desire, and pray, and labour to have "part in the first resurrection?" Would *you*, my reader?

* "The First Resurrection and Rapture of the Saints."

Then seek to know in your soul the power of Christ's resurrection ! And, if sensible of this power, quickening you with the inner life—raising you above sin, above the world, above the bondage of the law, above self, above all earthly, carnal attractions,—then labour on, and toil on, and fight on, and suffer on a while longer,—for soon you shall spring from the dust, and bathing your quickened spiritual body in the beams of the resurrection morn, you shall unite with all the risen saints in singing, “O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?”

CHAPTER X.

HEAVEN, THE CONSUMMATION OF THE INNER LIFE.

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."—COL. i. 12.

It is necessary that we should now conduct our subject to a close. What more appropriate and pleasing termination of a theme so heavenly than a brief contemplation of the heaven itself, to whose ultimate perfection the inner life of the Christian is tending,—of which it is the germ and the earnest—and in whose deathless splendours it will soon be enshrined ! The spiritual life which God has breathed into our souls will never rest until it reaches its full and perfect development. It is now but in its embryo state. Deep as are its pulsations, powerful as are its actings, mighty as are its achievements, holy as are its breathings, it is yet but in its infancy, compared with that state of perfection to which

it is destined to arrive. The most complete impress of the Divine image upon the renewed soul of man is but an outline of the picture. The highest state of sanctification to which the believer can arrive here, is but the first dawn of day, contrasted with the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," which will burst upon him in a world of perfect holiness. Heaven will complete the work which sovereign grace has begun upon earth. Heaven is the consummation of the spiritual life of the believer. We have selected, as an illustration of this thought, the deeply interesting words addressed by the apostle to the Colossian saints: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." There are in this passage some points of the deepest moment, all bearing a close relation to the great subject which, in the preceding pages, has been occupying our attention.

Our first inquiry relates to the 'meetness' for heaven here spoken of. And with regard to this point, let me observe, it forms the very basis of our subject—the groundwork of the whole. There are those, perhaps, who would

make the consideration of heaven their starting-point: but of what real value are mere notions of heaven? Magnificent, poetic, and even accurate, though they may be, yet if a man has no scriptural, no real meetness for heaven, his notion of it is but the dream of a Mahometan—the vision of a Turkish paradise; it is not that bright, that holy, that Divine conception of heaven, which a mind, renewed by the Spirit, and sanctified by grace, forms. It is an earthly picture of heaven, conceived by an earthly mind.

In what, then, consists this ‘meetness’ for heaven, to which the apostle refers? Need I say, that it excludes all idea of any personal, natural, or original meetness in the sinner himself?—the destructive doctrine of the Popish church, and may I not add, the wretched figment of many who falsely call themselves Protestants! The only moral meetness there is in man natural—be not alarmed, my reader—is a meetness for hell! There are already in the natural man the elements of hell, even as there are in the spiritual man the elements of heaven. The smouldering embers of eternal destruction are there, a fitness only for the

abodes where, in regions of darkness and woe, the sinner is banished for ever from God. And before man can have a moral meetness for heaven, he must pass through a moral change, assimilating him to the nature of heaven. "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified."

Our first observation, then, with regard to this 'meetness,' refers *to the renewal of the Holy Spirit*, through which the believer passes. Heaven is the abode of a renewed people; it is a holy place, and the home of the holy; and before the sinner can have any real meetness for heaven, any well-grounded hope of glory, he must be a partaker of a nature harmonising with the purity, and corresponding with the enjoyments, of heaven. Heaven would be no heaven to a carnal mind, to an unsanctified heart. Were it possible to translate an unconverted individual from this world to the abodes of eternal glory, overwhelmed with the effulgence of the place, and having no fellowship of feeling with the purity of its enjoyments, and the blessedness of its society, he would exclaim—"Take me hence—it is not the place for me—I have no sympathy with it—I have

no fitness for it—I have no pleasure in it.” Solemn thought !

Here let me remind the reader of those searching words of God’s Holy Spirit, in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, where the apostle says, in the fifth verse—“ For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” In the twenty-first chapter of the book of the Revelation, and the twenty-seventh verse—“ And there shall in nowise enter into it anything that defileth, neither worketh abomination, or maketh a lie ; but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” And what were the words of the Saviour to Nicodemus ? In the third chapter of the Gospel by John, and the third verse, we have them : “ Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” These are Divine and awful verities. Reader ! you *must* be born again of the Spirit, or heaven will be to you a distant, an unknown, and unapproachable region. You must “ be renewed in the spirit of your mind,” and

become "a new creature in Christ Jesus;" or, be it known unto you, heaven will never be your eternal dwelling-place.

This 'meetness,' then, to which the apostle refers, implies a spiritual change in the inward man, the begetting of an inner life. The Christian is a renewed creature—he is a partaker of the Divine nature: he has sympathies, affections, and desires imparted to him by the Spirit, which assimilate him to the happiness and purity of heaven. It is impossible but that he must be there. He possesses a nature unfit for earth, and congenial only with heaven. He is the subject of a spiritual life that came from, and now ascends to, heaven. All its aspirations are heavenly—all its breathings are heavenly—all its longings are heavenly,—and thus it is perpetually soaring towards that world of glory from whence it came, and for which God is preparing it. So that it would seem utterly impossible but that a renewed man must be in heaven, since he is the partaker of a nature fitted only for the regions of eternal purity and bliss.

The second step in this preparation, or meetness for heaven, introduces to us the work

of Jesus—the great atoning, finished work of the Son of God. And here we are referred to the meetness of *title* which the believer possesses to this “inheritance.” And what is his title, beloved? What is it that gives the Christian a valid deed, a right of possession to eternal glory? It is his justification by faith through the imputed righteousness of Christ. This is the only valid title to eternal glory which God will admit,—the righteousness of His dear Son, imputed to him that believeth. Here is the grand meetness of a poor, lost, polluted, undone sinner!—The meetness that springs from the spotless righteousness of the Lord Jesus, “who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” “He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

Behold, then, beloved, the high vantage-ground on which a saint of God stands, with regard to his hope of heaven. He stands out of his own righteousness, in the righteousness of another. He stands accepted in the Accepted One, he stands justified in the Justified One, and justified, too, by God, the great Justifier. As we spoke of the necessity of the new

birth—of the spiritual renewal of the mind, as supplying a spiritual *change* necessary for the enjoyment of heaven, so we speak of the necessity of an interest in this justifying righteousness, as supplying a spiritual *title* necessary for the possession of heaven; and we say to every man who has not fled out of the ruin of his own righteousness, and taken up his rest in the righteousness of Christ, that he has no valid title to glory: if the great divorce has not taken place—the separation of himself from himself—and if he has not been brought to the grand trust of a poor sinner—the righteousness of the incarnate God—then, all his hope of heaven is as unsubstantial as a dream—a vision that passeth away.

We must connect with this statement the atoning blood which cleanseth us from all sin—the blood which purifies—the blood which washes—the blood in which are drowned all the believer's iniquities—the blood which has cancelled all his transgressions, and which presents him before God, washed whiter than virgin snow.

Nor must we overlook, in this consideration of the meetness for heaven, *the adoption of the believer*. God having made him His son, has

adopted him as His child, has taken him into His family, so that he becomes “an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ;” and standing in this filial relation to God he has a meetness for the Father’s house, which belongs only to the children of adoption.

And what, let me ask,—as entering very essentially into this meetness for glory,—what is the great end of all God’s dealings with his people? For what purpose is the Lord’s furnace in Zion, and his fire in Jerusalem? It is to purify, and sanctify, and meeten the believer for “the inheritance of the saints in light.” All your heaven-blessed trials, all your sanctified temptations, all the covenant transactions of God with you, beloved, in the way of afflictive providences, are designed but to meeten you more thoroughly for “the inheritance of the saints in light.” All the disentwining of your affections from around creatures and created things, all the disappointments you meet with,—the cisterns He breaks, and the beautiful gourds He withers,—yea, all the steps of God with you, beloved, are but to detach you from earth, and earthly things; and thus the more perfectly to meeten you

for “the inheritance of the saints in light.” In this point of view, who would not welcome the severest chastisement? who would not drink willingly the bitterest cup? who would not take joyfully the spoiling of all that is dear and fond? who would not be willing to have the fetter unbound, the chain snapped, the bond severed, that gives liberty to his struggling and ascending spirit, and brings him, in a state of holy meetness, nearer and still nearer heaven?

The second inquiry relates to the inheritance itself, for which this ‘meetness’ is given—
“The inheritance of the saints in light.”

Our first remark refers to heaven as an “inheritance;” under this figure it is here presented to the mind. Nor is this the only passage in which the same similitude occurs. In the first of Ephesians, and the eleventh verse, we read,—“In whom also we have obtained an *inheritance*, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” In the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the fifteenth verse,—“And for this cause He is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the

transgressions which were under the first testimony, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal *inheritance*." In the first epistle of Peter, the first chapter and the fourth verse, we have a striking unfolding of our inheritance: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively (or a living) hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an *inheritance* incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last day." And if we will turn to the first chapter of Ephesians, and the thirteenth verse, it will be observed we have a pledge or an earnest of this inheritance: "In whom, also, after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the *earnest* of our *inheritance*, unto the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of his glory." And if it be inquired what the saints of God do thus inherit? the answer will be found in the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation by John, and the seventh verse: "He that overcometh

shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be My son." How vast, how illimitable, then, the inheritance of the saints—inheriting "all things!" It is a beautiful idea of heaven; it is a lovely picture, on which the eye of faith delights to dwell. The earthly heir looks at his inheritance, surveys it, walks through it, luxuriates amidst its beauties, and anticipates its full possession. The heir of glory has his inheritance too. It is heaven: he looks to it, he longs for it, and soon the Saviour will come in personal glory, and institute him into its full and eternal possession.

But observe *whose* is this inheritance. It is the "inheritance of the saints." And who are "the saints?" Ask the world, and it will answer, "They are the fanatics, the enthusiasts, the deluded of society." Ask others, and they reply, "The baptized—all who have been baptized are saints." And ask many who profess not to be of the world, and who laugh to scorn the dogmas of the Papacy, and the semi-Popish doctrines of the Tractarian, and even they are at a loss for a better answer. But who are "the saints," beloved? They are the Lord's people—the Lord's holy ones, of every name,

and from every fold. They form the whole election of grace ; the chosen, ransomed, called people of God, be their outward name amongst men what it may—whether they belong to your section of the Church or to mine—all who are sanctified by God the Father—all who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb—all who are renewed by the Holy Spirit—all who are partakers of the inner life—all who have “ the white stone,” and “ the new name ” in that white stone—all who are living holy, godly lives, *all* belong to the family of the “ saints.” Is it yet asked, Who are the “ saints ?” They are God’s sanctified ones, in whom dwelleth the Holy Spirit, and by whose grace the Lord is, day by day, step by step, carrying on that blessed kingdom of grace in their hearts which will soon fit them for the full possession of eternal glory. You may think it, my reader, a light matter to be a “ saint ”—an epithet of scorn by an ungodly world ; but, oh ! let me tell you, the day will come when you would gladly lick the very dust of the saints’ feet—gladly take hold of the skirts of their garments, as they ascend up into everlasting glory. But as you loathed them, and scorned

them, and persecuted them, and separated yourselves from them when upon earth—so, when they enter the abodes of bliss, you will be separated from them, banished into everlasting woe, to mingle and to herd throughout eternity with those with whose unrenewed natures, and carnal minds, and earthly pursuits, you now sympathise and assimilate. Awful thought!

But observe, they are “the saints in light.” Shall we refer this to their *character*? They are indeed “the children of the light, and of the day.” They have “passed from death unto life,” and “from darkness into marvellous light.” The light of the Spirit is in them—the light of truth is in them—the light of holiness is in them. They, and they alone, possess real light; all others are in darkness—the darkness of death. With all a man’s deep, erudite, beautiful philosophy, his pure ethics, his splendid attainments in human science—yet, apart from the indwelling of the Spirit of grace, the inbeing of Jesus “the Sun of Righteousness,” he is the “child of the night and of darkness.” But the “child of the day” is the true believer in Jesus, who has been “trans-

lated out of darkness into his marvellous light," by the mere act of his sovereign mercy. What a beautiful image of the true Christian is *light*! The child of the light! "The saints in light!" Walking in the light of a Father's reconciled face—walking in the light that beams from the cross of Jesus—walking in the light of an indwelling, teaching, sanctifying Spirit—walking in that bright, luminous path, which "shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Or shall we refer this description of the glorified saints to their present place of abode? Emphatically and truly, they are "the saints *in light*." They are in heaven, the abode of Him who is "Light," essential light, in whom is "no darkness at all"—"dwelling in light which no man hath seen, nor can see." They are in the abodes of perfect purity, of which light is the expressive symbol; they are in the regions of perfect knowledge, of which light is the magnificent metaphor; they are in heaven, the place of perfect light, in which is no more darkness. How beautifully is this description of heaven placed before us in the holy Word! Thus in the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah, and nineteenth verse—oh, what words are these!—"The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for

brightness shall the moon give light unto thee ; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself ; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." "The inheritance of the saints in light!" We find the same beautiful figure, setting forth heaven, in the twenty-second chapter of Revelation, the fifth verse : "And there shall be no night there ; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever." And if we refer back to the twenty-first chapter and the twenty-third verse, we read—"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it ; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day ; for there shall be no night there." The glorified saints are "the saints in light." No more veilings of the Father's countenance—no more "walking in darkness, having no light"—no more mourning over Divine desertions, the

suspensions of the Father's experienced love—no more tears to dim the eye—no more clouds of unbelief to darken the mind—no more mental despondency to enshroud the spirit ;—they leave the gloom, and the mist, and the fog, and the darkness of ignorance, error, and pollution behind them, and they flee to the regions of light, to “the inheritance of the saints,” of which “the Lamb is the light thereof.”

But it will be observed, that these glorified saints are said to be “*partakers* of the inheritance.” “Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” There is something very emphatic in the word. We are “partakers” of it now, in Christ our Head. In consequence of our union to Christ, the exalted Head of the church, we are at present “partakers” of this inheritance. We have the first dawnings of it in our soul : the foretaste and the antepast—and, what is best of all, the indwelling of the Spirit, who is the earnest of its possession. Beloved, we warn you against the doctrine held by some, which teaches, that after passing through the great changes which we have just specified, and while standing upon the very borders of heaven, the believer may miss the goal and never enter

“the inheritance of the saints in light;” may be a partaker of the renewing, sanctifying grace of the Spirit, and stand accepted in the righteousness of Christ, and yet, after all, may fall away and be lost for ever! We speak of this—not to wound the feelings of those who hold it—whose persons we would love—but to warn you against a doctrine so contrary to God’s Word. We speak of it to the glory of God and of his truth, which teaches us that we have the earnest of that inheritance in the indwelling of the Spirit; and if we have the “earnest” of the inheritance in the possession of the Spirit, we must, and shall assuredly, have the inheritance itself. “Partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light”—“partakers” with all the saints of God—“partakers” with the whole family of the elect—“partakers” with all the children of adoption—“partakers” with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with David, and Solomon, and with all who have gone before us, with all who have entered heaven a little in advance; and partakers with all the “ransomed of the Lord, who shall yet come to Zion with everlasting songs upon their head, obtaining joy and gladness, their sorrow and their sighing fleeing away!” Oh, who would not be a “par-

taker of the inheritance of the saints in light?" Reader, if you are a humble possessor of the inner life, you shall be a happy partaker of this glorious inheritance—the life which is to come.

A few words only, upon the precept based upon this subject. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

Beautiful is the order of the Holy Ghost here. Observe to whom this grateful acknowledgment is made—"unto the Father." Then the sweet truth stands revealed,—luminous in its own celestial light,—*that heaven is a Father's gift*. And oh, how sweet, to trace all our mercies to a Father's love, to a parent's heart,—to look to Jesus, whose righteousness gives us a title—to look to the Holy Spirit, whose sanctifying grace gives us a meetness, as the precious gifts of a Father's love; then to rise through these up to the Father himself, and trace the gift of heaven—the consummation of the inner life—to the heart of the First Person of the glorious Trinity. Who, after reading this passage, will any longer rest entirely and exclusively in Jesus—precious as he is? Who will not, through Jesus as the Mediator, rise to

the Father, and trace up all the blessings of redemption, and all his hope of glory, to the part which the Father took in the great and wondrous work? Oh, how unutterably blessed is it to see the Father engaged, equally with the Son and the Spirit, in preparing for us, and in preparing us for, "the inheritance of the saints in light!" "Giving thanks unto the Father." Upon what grounds, beloved? Oh! it was the Father who provided the Saviour, his beloved Son. It is from the Father that the Spirit emanates who renews and sanctifies. It is the Father who has prepared the inheritance, and who, by his upholding power, will at last bring us safely there. All thanks, then, all adoration and praise unto the Father, "who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

In closing, let me affectionately ask you, my reader—in what does your meetness for heaven consist? Put not the question from you—transfer it not to another; let it come home to your own conscience—for in a little while your destiny will be fixed—eternally, irrevocably fixed; and one half-second of hell's torment will fill thy soul with remorse, terror, and unavailing regret, that in the land

of hope and in the day of grace you turned your back upon both, refused the mercy of God in Christ, rejected his dear Son, and died in your sins. In what does your meetness for heaven, then, consist? If it is only the meetness of a mere profession—if it is but the meetness of a mere notional reception of truth—if it is the meetness merely of an external waiting upon the sanctuary, the public means of grace,—it is a meetness not for heaven, but for banishment from heaven! Are you born again of the Spirit of God? Have you fled to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation? Have you the “earnest,” the pledge of heaven, in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God—in the life of God in your soul? Have you the first sheaf of the harvest bound up in your bosom? Have you been sealed by God’s Spirit as an heir of glory?

To God’s saints I would say—cultivate an habitual, a growing meetness for heaven. Be not satisfied with past attainments, with your present measure of grace and standard of holiness; but, beloved, since heaven is a holy place, cultivate holiness—an habitual growing meetness for “the inheritance of the saints in light.” Be advancing, be progressing, be

pressing onwards; “putting on the whole armour of God,” “casting aside the weight that so easily besets you,” the garment that trails upon the earth, and pressing onward and heavenward, until you reach the confines of bliss, and enter within the portals of glory.

And I would say—look upon all the Lord’s covenant dealings with you as but preparatory to your approaching emancipation from all sin, suffering, and sorrow. Welcome your trials,—they are sent by your Father. Welcome the stroke of his rod,—it is a parent smiting. Welcome, oh! welcome, beloved, whatever detaches you from earth, and wings your spirit heavenward. Oh! welcome the furnace that consumes the dross and the tin, and brings out the precious gold and silver, to reflect in your soul, even now, the dawnings of “the inheritance of the saints in light.” Oh! be submissive, meek, and quiet, under God’s chastening and afflicting hand, and receive all his dispensations as only tending to meeten you more perfectly for “the inheritance of the saints in light.”

Let this subject cheer and comfort the bereaved of the Lord, from whose hearts have fled the loved and sanctified ones of earth, to the eternal heaven. Oh! how full of conso-

lation to the bereaved heart is this subject ! Whither have the departed fled, who sleep in Jesus ? They have but exchanged the region of darkness and shadow, for the regions of light and glory. They have gone from the scene of impurity, defilement, and sin, to the place of perfect holiness, complete sanctification, and of eternal love. Then dry your tears—then press the consolations of the Gospel to your sorrowing heart, and look up with that eye of faith that pierces and penetrates the dark clouds that intervene between them and you, and behold them now “partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” And oh ! yourselves anticipate the blessed moment, when the Saviour shall send, not an enemy, but a friend—for such is death to the Christian—to open the cage that imprisons your spirit, and let you escape to the abodes of eternal glory. Oh ! anticipate, and by anticipating, be preparing, day by day, for its realisation ; anticipate the happy moment which releases you from “the body of sin and death,” and ushers you into the full and eternal blaze of “the inheritance of the saints in light.”

Such is heaven, and such is the consummation of the Inner Life. As that life descended

from God, so to God it shall ultimately and finally return. It shall never, never die. Not a spark shall be quenched, nor shall a pulse cease to beat—not a thought that it has conceived, nor a desire it has cherished, nor a prayer it has breathed, nor a work it has accomplished, nor a victory it has won, shall die; all, all shall survive in ever-verdant, ever-growing, ever-enduring glory. The babe in grace shall be there! The young man, strong in overcoming the wicked one, shall be there! The father, matured in experience, and laden with the golden fruits of age, shall be there! All, all shall reach heaven at last—the end and the consummation of the life of God in their souls. Oh, to have this heaven in our hearts now! Heaven is love—the place of love—the perfection of love. And what is God's love in our hearts but the foretaste of heaven—the prelibation of heaven—the first-gatherings of the vintage—the pledge and earnest of all that is to come?

“Thou hidden love of God, whose height,
Whose depth unfathom'd, no man knows;
I see from far thy beauteous light,
Inly I sigh for thy repose:
My heart is pain'd, nor can it be
At rest, till it find rest in thee.

" 'Tis mercy all, that thou hast brought
 My mind to seek her peace in thee!
 Yet while I seek, and find thee not,
 No peace my wand'ring soul shall see.
 Oh, when shall all my wand'rings end,
 And all my steps to Jesus tend?

" Is there a thing beneath the sun
 That strives with thee my heart to share?
 Oh! take it thence, and reign alone,
 The Lord of every motion there!
 Then shall my heart from earth be free,
 When it has found repose in thee.

" O hide this self from me, that I
 No more, *but Christ in me, may live;*
 My vile affections crucify,
 Nor let one darling lust survive.
 In all things nothing may I see,
 Nothing desire or seek, but thee.

" O Lord, thy sov'reign aid impart,
 To save me from low-thoughted care;
 Chase this self-will through all my heart,
 Through all its latent mazes there.
 Make me thy duteous child, that I
 Ceaseless may Abba, Father, cry.

" Each moment draw from earth away
 My heart, that lowly waits thy call;
 Speak to my inmost soul, and say,
 ' I am thy Love, thy God, thy all!'
 To feel thy power, to hear thy voice,
 To taste thy love, be all my choice."

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